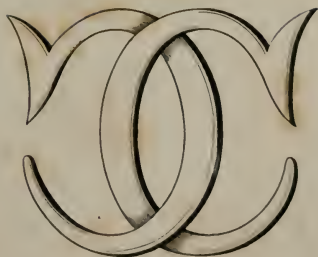


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THE BUCKLYN SHAIG.

A Tale of the last Century.

BY THE
HON. MRS. ALFRED MONTGOMERY,
AUTHOR OF "ASHTON HALL," POEMS, ETC.

"Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord."

Deut. xxxii. 35; Romans xii. 19; Hebrews x. 30.

IN TWO VOLUMES.—VOL. II.



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THE BUCKLYN SHAIG



CHAPTER I.

THE VILLA NEGRONI.

A SHORT time before the incident we have just described at Raymond Castle, a very different scene was being enacted in one of the large apartments of the Villa Negroni, in Rome. It was in a lofty room, with a carved and painted ceiling, and walls hung in panels of green damask, each panel containing some masterpiece of art. There were four windows with seats in the embrasures, the walls being at least four feet in thickness.

Two of the windows looked towards

the Albano hills, over the wide campagna, intersected with the ruined arches of the ancient aqueducts; and in the foreground marked by tall cypresses, some standing in dark groups, some in long lines of avenue near the house. The other windows looked over the garden: narrow, formal walks, small enclosures of box, with a rippling fountain in the centre; hedges of China roses, more covered with blossom than leaves, and clusters of pomegranates in full flower.

It was early in the month of June. The heat was oppressive, and Rome was empty of all its wealthier inhabitants, who had gone to their villas among the mountains.

Lord Clifford had been very anxious to remove his wife at the end of April into cooler regions. But her entreaties to remain where she was, had become so urgent that, on the whole, it was thought wiser to agree to her wishes than to run the risk of thwarting her in her then weak and precarious state. The great size of the rooms, and the fact that the villa stands

surrounded by gardens, and quite removed from the streets, made it as cool a residence as any to be found actually in Rome.

The malady of which Angela was dying seems generally to awaken in the sufferers an intense longing to go home to die; and to Angela this was home. In health she had called England home, and the land of her adoption. But as the insidious disease tightened its hold upon her frail form, England faded away out of her mind, like the putting off something that had never really formed a part of herself, and the innate love of Rome, the scenes and associations she was born to, came back with a double force — the force of old love increased by the dread of losing it. Whenever Lord Clifford had suggested that she should be moved to Frascati or Albano, she had pleaded so plaintively to remain where she was that the question had to be dropped at once.

The red spot of carmine would come again into those sunken cheeks, and the

deep eyes glisten with unnatural eagerness, as she would lay her thin hand on her husband's arm, and say :

“Leave me here, dear George, leave me here in peace. I like to lie and listen to those convent bells that I have known since my birth ; I like to look on those gaunt cypresses, and fancy they are the sentinels of death waiting for me, and keeping guard over this house, that their doomed prisoner may not escape. When I lie awake at night, I can see their dark forms standing so motionless in the moonlight, and casting on the ground shadows even darker than themselves ; and I talk to them as if they were living things and could hear me. I bid them wait for my coming a little longer, and not dream that I wish to linger. And I like to fancy how, when I am gone, the birds will still sing God's praises within the close shelter of their impenetrable gloom, and the light of the moon catch the sharp edges of their scale-like branches, and leave a silver fringe

there. All that is beautiful and holy will go on flowing through the wide fields of time into the deep ocean of eternity, just as I have watched them doing during my brief happy life with you, my dear husband.

“How beautiful is the succession of God’s mercies, and the perennial flow of his gifts. One poor grain of wheat drops into the earth, as I shall soon be doing ; ‘Sown in corruption, raised in incorruption.’ But you are left to shelter Rose ; and when you join me, Rose will have, I trust, another protector ; and finally, one by one, we shall fall into the bosom of eternity, and be all reunited in the light of God’s glory.

“Nay, dear George, do not weep. It is not sad to me, it is calm and hopeful. The separation from earth, and from all my dear human ties, has come so gradually that day by day my will has seemed to sink deeper into the will of God ; and though I dare not be impatient to go, yet

I long for the hour when my anointed feet shall step across the narrow line that divides the life of this world from the life of the next, and my anointed eyes look up and see the face of my Redeemer."

It often seemed to Lord Clifford, as he sat beside his wife's couch through the long quiet hours of her restless, sleepless nights, that he had never really known her till then. The approach of death had opened the hidden shrines of her mind, and with a freedom hitherto unknown to herself, she poured forth rich treasures of thought and imagination, all brought into such exquisite harmony by the intensity of her piety, that he was amazed at the manifold wealth of heart and intellect which he had unconsciously possessed in the wife so soon to be taken from him. He was constantly regretting that though he had always thought Angela perfect, and had deeply loved her, he had not long ago enjoyed the same amount of interchange of thought which he was now experiencing. He began to

think he had never sufficiently appreciated her, and would have given anything to have learnt early in life all that Angela might have bestowed upon him.

The thought was natural, and inevitable under the circumstances, but could he have put it in practice it would not have answered.

There are very few people who are able to live a daily life in the society of an heroic nature. Angela herself would have wasted her inner self had she, before the approaching end, given out as much of her heart as she now found herself doing. And certainly Lord Clifford, whose amiable disposition did not raise him to great heights, would have found the full expansion of his wife's intellect too much for him as daily bread ; it would have puzzled him, perhaps wearied him. Sweetness, a fond nature, an orderly, well-regulated demeanour, and talents enough to please but not to dazzle, was all that Lord Clifford really wanted in his helpmate.

Possibly Angela herself had felt this, though it is doubtful if she reasoned about it. Anyhow, her womanly instinct guided her to give just what he wanted, and as much as he wanted, and to keep the rest hidden in her heart, though often perceived and always more than suspected by her intimate friends. But now, like the setting sun, she robed herself in glory. The inner beauty of her high-toned soul shone forth in variety and splendour. The secrets of a long habit of pious practices, and of well-ordered devotion, spontaneously revealed themselves; and the perfume of intense humility pervaded every action and every word so fully, that while she betrayed the genius of a superior mind, she also showed the docility and lowliness of a little child.

“Will the prince come to-day, George?”

“He will, my dearest, if I send to Frascati for him. He said he would come at any moment; I have only to let him know when you wish to see him. But as he was here only the evening before last, he

is hardly likely to return so soon, without a summons."

Angela lay a few moments without replying, her eyes fixed on the blue sky and her lips moving as if in prayer. Then turning a smiling face to her husband, she said :

"Yes, George, let him be sent for, and beg him to bring me the last sacraments."

Lord Clifford turned pale, but controlling himself, he asked if she felt worse ?

"No ; I feel better, and I would gladly see him while I am able fully to understand and follow the words of Extreme Unction. Do not be distressed, my beloved. But I know the end is very near. You perceive that I have lost my cough, and I know that fact foretells the end ; besides, I have a conviction it will soon be over now, and I want to be on the safe side, so send directly for Cardinal York."

Lord Clifford kissed her, and left the room to do her bidding with a heavy heart.

The faithful adherents of a fallen cause have seldom had a more worthy object on

which to lavish their unfruitful loyalty than in the person of Henry Stuart, Cardinal York. The heir-presumptive to a throne obscured to the eyes of the world in the character of a priest; and a prince of the royal blood hidden, at the early age of twenty-three in the scarlet robes of the cardinalate instead of donning those of royalty, were all additional claims for romantic devotion. The great misfortunes of his family had required a doubly pathetic tenderness from this touching homage paid by the sovereign pontiff to fallen grandeur, in the person of Henry Stuart. And the character of the recipient was in harmony with the gift. In very early youth he had been remarkable for a lively disposition and sprightly wit, such as might easily have led him into the faults of dissipation so injurious to their cause, manifested by the elder members of the family, and so deeply lamented by their adherents. But a vocation to the priesthood had soon laid the fetters of piety upon the waywardness of the

youth ; and, ever after, Cardinal York was more beloved as Bishop of Frascati than he could have been as heir to a throne.

The Romans are, of all people, those most likely to appreciate the beauty of high rank, combined with self-sacrifice and personal charity to the poor. Accustomed to hold their own princely families in the highest veneration, and to see dignitaries of the church surrounded with a greater amount of etiquette than is met with elsewhere, the prestige imparted by the noble or the wealthy, undertaking in their own persons the relief of the poor and the ministrations of religion, has a more telling effect than in countries where liberalism has brought all ranks more down to one level. Henry Stuart had known poverty and privation, actual and not only comparative. At different periods in his long and retired life he had had to part with his plate, books, and valuables, to be able to exist. And finally, was so utterly reduced in circumstances, that seven years before his death,

at the advanced age of eighty-two, he had gratefully accepted a pension from George III., which had been offered him in a way that does honour to the House of Hanover. But though this was the real state of the case, and in the hard school of adversity Henry Stuart had learned the full value of money, and the minute details of life's necessary requirements, yet so deeply and poetically impressed by the greatness of his birthright were the worthy people of his diocese, that to this day they recount anecdotes of the royal bishop's extreme ignorance of what want could be; and of his generous and overflowing liberality when once the idea of hunger and misery as existing amongst his flock penetrated his august mind.

To this hour there are legends at Frascati of the prince priest's ignorance and kindness. One day when leaving in his painted and gilded coach his episcopal palace on his way to Rome, and being then (as who has not been ever since!) beset by beggars, he

turned to his secretary and asked, "Why do these people molest me, they have meat and wine, what more do they want?"

"Yes, your excellency," was the reply; "but they have no bread."

"No bread!" exclaimed the cardinal, turning pale; and forthwith from each hand, out of each window, was flung promiscuously among the crowd all the money his Eminence happened to be taking to Rome with him.

There is more of poetry than probability in these anecdotes; but like all other legends and songs of the people, they portray the popular feeling.

To the Clifford family the presence of the younger scion of the royal house in whose cause their recent ancestors had spilled their best blood, and their present descendants lavished their best gold, was productive of feelings which in our prosaic and unsacrificing loyalty, we can hardly realize. Moreover, the Cardinal York was one greatly to be beloved on his own account. He pos-

sessed the characteristic beauty of his family : large, full hazel eyes, with that peculiar expression of swimming in sweetness, which imparted something almost womanly to the beauty of the countenance. A pale, bland forehead, and an oval face ; the mouth rather large, but divested of all the coarseness that marked some of the previous generation of Stuarts ; and a tall, remarkably graceful figure, with high-bred hands and supple limbs that told of race. Add to these personal characteristics a voice of mellow sweetness and a charm of manner, a simplicity and a depth of tender piety belonging to him in his office of priest, and it is easy to understand the touching consolation it was to Lord Clifford to see this royal object of all his reverence and affection attending upon the spiritual wants of his dying wife.

After Angela was satisfied that the cardinal was sent for, she desired to speak with Rose, and to be left alone with her. Lord Clifford had latterly been anxious to keep

his daughter a good deal away from the sick room. He entertained the opinion prevalent in those days, that consumption was catching; and harrowed as his feelings were at seeing Angela gradually sinking under the fatal malady, the bare idea of his darling child incurring any risk was more than he had courage to face; and consequently Rose had much to suffer by being constantly dissuaded from attending on her mother, which Angela had acquiesced in, as in all else that was prescribed for her, with a sad smile of resignation. Rose was, therefore, doubly impressed by her mother's sending for her at the same time as she sent for her confessor, and the impression was heightened when her gaze fell on her mother's face. Long did they look into each other's eyes, the daughter kneeling by her mother's side, and the mother softly stroking the rich clusters of her golden hair as she bent her head to conceal the tears.

Last words of love, last injunctions of duty never to be forgotten, filled up that

solemn interview : nor did it close without Angela's sending through Rose a message of affection to Teresa, such as she might have sent to an absent daughter of her own.

Teresa's absence was still a bleeding wound in the heart of Angela. But it was one she could not speak of openly to Lord Clifford, nor even to Rose. Madame de Bray was the only confidant of those words of intense affection with which the dying woman spoke of Teresa. Not one was forgotten, and all were faithfully carried to her for whom they were intended.

The Orsinis had been in Rome up to the beginning of May ; then they had been compelled to return to Florence. But as up to that time Angela had rallied so frequently and so wonderfully, astonishing even the medical men by her marvellous vitality, the princess had shared Lord Clifford's hopes that Angela might be moved to Florence later on in the spring. And so, owing to her betraying little change from day to day, and those changes fre-

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quently appearing to be rather favourable than otherwise, no one save the sufferer herself had yet realized the fact that the end was really close at hand. After speaking separately to Rose and Madame de Bray, Angela seemed to enter at once on the solemn, conscious, orderly preparation for death. The cardinal could not arrive until late in the day. The intervening hours were spent in prayer. As the day grew cooler, she had begged to have the shutters opened, and all the air and light admitted into the room that was possible.

“Let in all the light you can, dear George : you know I pine for light. Let me see the red gleam of the setting sun. Ah, it seems to expand my very heart as it falls upon me. But brighter light is coming, dear George—and coming soon, God be praised ! Now, read me the prayer for the dying. His eminence will soon be here, and then I shall care no more to look on the material light of this world.”

While the poor broken-hearted husband

was keeling and praying as she desired, Angela seemed to fall into a tranquil sleep. Lord Clifford paused to listen to the sound of opening doors and approaching footsteps. The cardinal had come, and Lord Clifford went to the outer antechamber to receive him, and knelt to kiss his hand. Raising him from the ground the cardinal clasped him in his arms, while the tears stood in his eyes, and in a voice broken by emotion he spoke to him of courage and of peace. The cardinal had gone to the Vatican on entering Rome to obtain from the Holy Father his last blessing for the dying woman. Arrangements had been made for the cardinal, after his interview with Angela, to administer the Sacraments himself, and to have them brought from the neighbouring parish church.

And so the last rites were performed as day faded into night : the soul annealed for its transit into life ; the wasted body anointed for its rest in the grave. Angela had followed every word, and made the

responses in her own sweet voice, which to the last had lost none of its tone and richness. When all was over she lay quite still, and then seemed for a while to be unconscious of all around. Once she called :

“Teresa, Teresa ! Have they sent for Teresa ? No ; God’s will be done. George, dear George, bury me by Mildred. Don’t carry me out of Italy. My own lake of Bracciano.”

Then she lay quite still, while the cardinal continued to pray for her. The various members of the family were grouped around her couch, her husband kneeling held her hand. From time to time she murmured the Sacred Name. And then—was it pallor that spread over her beautiful features ? or was it light from heaven falling on her face ?

Cardinal York raised his hand and pronounced the last absolution. As he ceased to speak she slightly bowed her head. The lids half-veiled the darkening eyes,

and with a scarcely audible sigh the spirit took its flight.

Terrible, indeed, is the unseemly haste with which in those southern climes the beloved dead are hurried from our sight. And the necessity, if necessity it be, imparts a hastiness in the performance of the last duties to the sacred remains which is hardly decorous, and which, probably, accounts for the diminished reverence, not for the souls of the departed, of course, in Catholic countries, but for the poor casket. As usual, no time was lost, and the cruel and heart-rending preparations commenced as soon as the breath was gone, and went on through the night.

By daybreak all was finished. The coffin-lid was closed over that beloved form; the room hung with black; the huge yellow tapers lighted, and the doors flung open for the long succession of friends, priests, and strangers, to pass by the pomp of death, and breathe a prayer for the departed.

The cardinal had refused to return home,

and spent the night in affectionately consoling the bereaved husband and the weeping girl.

The next day but one the funeral was to take place, and according to the custom of Italy, to us so repugnant, the relatives were not to attend.

The cardinal had offered his palace at Frascati to Lord Clifford and his daughter, intending himself to go to Venice. The offer was accepted, and the following morning the whole family quitted the Villa Negrone, leaving its dead inmate in the hands of religious, and two men servants who when all was once over, were to rejoin their master at Frascati.

A stagnant grief settled upon Lord Clifford, when he grew to realize his dreadful loss. He became silent and unobservant, tenderly affectionate to Rose, and liking always to have her near him; but quite incapable of making any effort to cheer her; and thus, unconsciously, adding to the poor child's early suffering by keeping constantly

before her eyes his own broken-hearted grief. Had it not been for the judicious and unremitting care of Madame de Bray, the effect upon her pupil's character of so much gloom would have been very bad for her. Great characters can bear the weight of great sorrow, but lesser minds are pressed flat, and become petty and peevish, unless a strong arm is there to support and raise them. Rose was of an affectionate, gentle, and joyous nature, but she was never intended for heroism, and if perpetual sadness had been allowed to put out the sparkle of her happy disposition, there would have been nothing grander to take its place.

Madame de Bray endeavoured by degrees to press this upon Lord Clifford's attention, and to obtain for Rose a few innocent recreations, such as were suited to her age and not out of place under the circumstances, long before Lord Clifford himself had consented to see his nearest friends, or hardly to let the light of heaven penetrate the closed windows. The sympathy of all

who knew him was called forth by the depth of his grief. The Orsinis wanted him to join them at Florence, but he could not be induced to rouse himself from the spot where he had sunk down immediately after his great loss. The summer months therefore glided sadly and slowly by, amid the woods and mountain heights of Frascati, before Lord Clifford could be induced to entertain the thought of returning to England and resuming his duties on his own estates.

CHAPTER II.

OLD FAITH REVIVED.

WE left Teresa silently wending her way to her own room on her return from the ride to Nutley Hall. Mr. Clifford found the Italian letters waiting for him on his study table. There were two for himself, one directed in his brother's writing, the other in Madame de Bray's. There were also two for Teresa, one from Madame de Bray enclosed in hers to Mr. Clifford, and one from Rose.

Roger guessed the sad tidings they were intended to impart, before he broke the seals. A few heartbroken words from his brother, told the brief tale of his loss, and

of his own anguish. There were more details given in the letter of Madame de Bray. She wrote, as she said, at the request of his lordship, who was too much broken down with sorrow to dwell upon the incidents of his wife's death.

Roger felt glad that he had read these letters alone, as it gave him time to reflect on how he should break the news to Teresa. Her evidently depressed spirits on returning an hour ago from Nutley Hall, had left a painful impression on his mind. It was clear to him that she had a deep-rooted affection for her aunt. He did not share that affection, indeed he was inclined to be jealous of it. Moreover, he began to feel that he was not altogether the person to know how to deal with the delicate feelings and tender heart of a young girl. What should he do with her grief if she took it greatly to heart? How should he bear with sad looks and tearful eyes, in the place of that perennial cheerfulness which had hitherto so gladdened him? He was greatly

shocked at Angela's death, though, as we have seen, he was not really attached to his sister-in-law, whose keen perception of character, combined with her great truthfulness, had always made him uncomfortable in her presence. Still, now she was gone, he felt what an immense loss she would be ; nor was he altogether without remorse on the subject, particularly when he read the maternal tenderness of her last messages to Teresa, as partially reported to him by Madame de Bray.

Roger walked musing up and down the room, feeling thoroughly out of his element and very undecided, for some time. At length, as it was to be done, he felt it was best to get it over. And putting the letters into his pocket he went to Teresa's room. He found his daughter wrapped in a white dressing-gown, and curled up in an arm-chair, with a book on her knee. She was half turned away from the door as he entered. The long hair that had been confined close under her riding-hat had made

its escape, and was wandering in dark wavy tresses over her shoulders and across her fair, round, well-moulded arm. With one hand she kept back her hair from her face, with the other she held open the book. She was so absorbed in her reading, that though she had replied "Come in" to his knock, she concluded it was only her maid come to dress her for dinner, and so she did not for a moment raise her head. But the first step her father made towards her, striking her as not being that of mademoiselle Julie, she looked up, uttered a little cry of surprise, and rose to meet him. She saw at once by his face that something was the matter, and her countenance fell. He did not know how to begin, or what to say. He felt, as he looked at her fragile delicate form, and saw her eyes dilate, and her cheeks turn nearly as white as her dress, that one sudden word might break down that delicate flower and leave it shattered at his feet. Still, he must speak, so he began :

“ I have bad news for you, my poor child, news from Italy. Your poor aunt is——”

But before he could finish his sentence, Teresa's face had assumed an expression of intense pain, a livid paleness grew round her lips, she suddenly clasped her hands, gave a faint cry, and fell lifeless in his arms. With an exclamation of despair her father raised her and laid her on the sofa, and rang the bell violently for assistance. He did not cease to ring it till both Julie and Mrs. Brown rushed into the room. The latter, as soon as her eyes fell on Teresa's face, exclaiming :

“ Ah, poor darling ! I thought as much.”

She proceeded at once to loosen her dress and apply all sorts of restoratives, but for a long time without any success.

A groom on horseback was sent to fetch the medical man from Blackdean. A full half-hour elapsed before Teresa gave any signs of life. Mr. Clifford never left the room, and watched with a settled look of

anguish all Mrs. Brown's attempts to recall the life-blood into that sweet wan face.

"Just like her mother, sir," said Mrs. Brown. "You know, sir, how she used to go off if anything dreadful startled her. I thought how it would be, when I saw Miss Teresa come back this time with the same beautiful milk-white complexion her poor mother had. It is heart, sir, that's what it is. Mrs. Clifford always said it was in her family. Her father died of it, and her elder sister. Ah, sir! you remember."

At length a faint dawn of life seemed to spread over Teresa's face; she sighed gently once or twice, and finally, opening her eyes, looked up at her father.

"My darling!" exclaimed the unhappy man. And bending down he kissed her brow, and hastily left the room to conceal his tears. Yes! tears, holy tears, on the curdled cheeks of Roger Clifford the murderer.

When the doctor arrived he confirmed Mrs. Brown's statement of its being the

result of the same tendency to disease of the heart which he had known in Mrs. Clifford, and which he had always apprehended would one day cause her death. Mrs. Brown's remarks, and the subsequent conversation with the doctor, produced a singular impression on Roger's mind. It carried back his thoughts nearly twenty years ago, to the one or two instances when the same sort of scenes were enacted in that same room, and he had stood watching another fair being, lying apparently lifeless, just as Teresa had done. His married life had gone so completely out of his mind, that from that time till now he had hardly ever thought about what happened during those few years. The past had seemed like a dream. It was the present only that gave it reality. He remembered that he had been rather careless and indifferent then, and he wondered to find himself so much more strongly affected now.

It was strange to him, when he paused to reflect upon it, to find that he appreciated

in his child the qualities he had been callous to in his wife. And when he found himself gentle and affectionate towards Teresa, he wondered that he had not felt a little more so towards her mother. He wondered he had never thought of all this before. He marvelled to find how completely he had buried the past; how utterly the noxious fumes of a bad life had obliterated so much that ought to have been his delight in possession, and his anguish in losing, but which had failed to be either. He had known that his wife had a tendency to heart complaint, but he never remembered having quailed at the thought of what it might end in, as he now quailed for Teresa. What would he not have given to have been able to bridge over those twenty years ago and this anxious now, with the memory of a well-spent life, instead of with the ghastly images and horrid remorse that alone found place in the whited sepulchre of his heart.

It was many days before Teresa began

to rally. Days of hushed watching, and anxiously silent thoughts. She did not leave her room for some time; and Roger would sit with his book before his face, while a careful observer would have perceived that the page was not on a level with his sight, but that his eyes were fixed on Teresa.

Poor child! It was her first sorrow, and it had come at a moment when the weary responsibility of life had begun already to weigh upon her young spirit. The peculiarities of her home had been telling against the hopefulness and joy with which she had first exchanged her convent-school for Raymond Castle. She had been feeling (as young motherless girls always must feel, unless the world has destroyed all their freshness and much of their innocence) the need of a woman's hand to guide her, and a woman's heart to confide in; and her thoughts had gone forth with longing towards Aunt Angela, and the refined softened brightness of her life at Nutley

Hall. The blow that had destroyed her hopes of seeing those days at least partially return, had fallen exactly at the moment when circumstances had carried her longing regrets to their culminating point; the prostration was proportionate, and had developed the sad certainty that she inherited her mother's complaint in even a worse form. It was one she might live with for many years, or that might cut her off quite suddenly in the flower of her youth.

Mr. Clifford's very frequent presence in his daughter's apartments was on the whole productive of restraint upon Teresa, and rather tended to increase her depression. She found out more from his silence than his words how inadequately he shared the regret and mourning for the dead which was devouring her heart. The incident had let her deeper down into her father's character than she had yet penetrated. And in spite of his increased tenderness to her, what she found there was not satisfactory. All this increased her sadness, and retarded

her recovery. One morning, when the feeling of her real loneliness was pressing upon her even more than usual, and the desire to speak freely and openly to some one who could understand her, she sent for Mrs. Brown, to take her opinion on a subject she had much at heart. It was to ask Mrs. Brown whether she thought Mr. Clifford would permit Father Netherby to come and see her, and as it would yet be some time before she could go to church, if mass might be said in her mother's oratory. Mrs. Brown cautiously paused a moment before making any reply, and then said :

“ Well, miss, it seems to me that Mr. Clifford would not wish to deprive you of the comfort of seeing Father Netherby, although the reverend father never *does* come here. I do not believe he and Mr. Clifford have met for above a year, although Mr. Clifford is very generous in sending down alms for the poor, and all that sort of thing. With regard to mass, miss, perhaps you had better speak to Father Netherby

first about that. To be sure, there is the privilege attached to your poor mother's oratory; and I know as she had a great many permissions from Rome; and may be the bishop would be very glad that mass should be said again in this old castle, that has ever been in Catholic hands, and that till Mr. Clifford's time had the chapel that belonged to the mission within its very walls, as you know, miss, till Mr. Clifford got permission to get rid of it, and move everything down to the chapel-house in the village. But I think, as I said before, miss, you had better say you wish to see Father Netherby, and speak to him first about having mass, before you say a word of that to Mr. Clifford."

Teresa's heart sank as she found her worst apprehensions thus confirmed by the evident caution and doubt conveyed by Mrs. Brown's reply, and, with her nervously eager disposition, she resolved on having the question decided at once. It did not seem possible to her that Father Netherby's

visit could be prevented. The scandal of forbidding the house to the priest would be so great that no one of the name of Clifford could possibly be guilty of it. It was a different thing to never inviting him, when there was no particular reason for his coming beyond the good understanding that ought to exist between the priest and the leading house of the place. And therefore Teresa had no doubt of success and permission; but she felt too physically weak and nervous to ask her father anything the thought of which made her heart beat faster. She therefore commissioned Mrs. Brown to go at once, and tell Mr. Clifford that she wished Father Netherby to be sent for.

How far Mrs. Brown appreciated the being selected for this mission may be somewhat doubtful; but anyhow it was not one she could refuse, even had she wished to do so. Summoning therefore all her courage, she knocked at Mr. Clifford's study-door and obtained admission. But it was not until he heard the unexpected

sound of Mrs. Brown's voice that he looked up from his book.

"If you please, sir, Miss Teresa has sent me to say that she would be very much obliged to you, if you would let one of the servants step down to Father Netherby, and tell him she wishes to see him."

A peculiar expression of annoyance swept over Mr. Clifford's face. After a momentary pause, he asked if Miss Clifford were feeling less well.

"No, sir, it is not that," replied the housekeeper, "but Miss Teresa would like to speak with the reverend father, as is natural, sir, seeing how ill she has been, and the sorrow she is in, poor young lady."

"Send for him, Mrs. Brown."

"Directly, sir?"

"Directly; and desire Vincenzo to order round my horse immediately, and William is to ride the chestnut horse."

Mrs. Brown escaped willingly to do her master's bidding, and to inform Teresa that the father was sent for.

The pale calm face of the Jesuit was a shade paler as he crossed that unaccustomed threshold. Years ago he had been in the habit of coming frequently to visit—not Mr. Clifford, certainly—but the young wife, in the first disappointment of her unhappy home, when her inexperienced youth and her natural sensitiveness not unfrequently threw the poor frail being into paroxysms of mental suffering, which were sure to tell seriously, and oftentimes suddenly upon her delicate organization. It was his wise direction that had taught Mildred the secret of that self-control which we have seen first almost irritate, and finally excite the admiration of her Italian sister-in-law. As he followed the servant up the same staircase, and saw him pause at the same door after an interval of more than twenty years, he said to himself, “*Le passé se retrouve toujours*—how true that is!” When he entered the room, Teresa looked up for a moment without speaking, hid her face in her hands, and

shed silent tears. He well knew all that was passing in that young heart. She had long ago told him the difficulties of her new home, as we have already seen, and it needed now only to take up the story from where she had last left it, heightened as it now was by her intervening illness and her sad loss. When she could speak, her first words were :

“ Oh, father, you see it needed this to bring you here. No less a price than all this sorrow was required for me ever to obtain what you know I have so long desired, *your* presence once again in my mother's home.”

“ And I find you,” he said, “ where I used to find her, and I trust, my child, *as* I used to find her—suffering, but patient; afflicted, but submissive; and in peace.”

“ Yes, father, yes,” murmured the weeping girl; “ but my loss is a heavy one, and it has come just when I so needed my darling aunt's presence, that *second* mother to me, the only mother I have ever known.”

The conversation was long and serious. She told him more freely than she had ever done what were her difficulties and trials connected with her father and her life at home, and he encouraged and strengthened her in the task she had put before her of endeavouring to win her father, and through his affections obtain from him, by God's grace, a complete change of life. Then came the expression of her desire that at least until her health was sufficiently restored for her to go to the chapel house, mass might be said three times a week at the castle. Father Netherby hesitated a little, but as the privilege of mass was connected with the castle, and though there had been a long intermission the bishop's permission had never been withdrawn: he would not say it could not be.

"The whole management and conduct of the household is greatly altered lately," he said. "Mrs. Brown is an excellent woman, and has always done her best to keep matters as they should be in a Christian family ;

but no power on earth would have induced me to say mass beneath this roof a year or less ago, when I know to a certainty that much went on that would have been disgraceful anywhere, and were doubly revolting to me from their taking place in the house your saintly mother had consecrated by her pious life. For you, my child, I will gladly do what I did for her, if you can obtain Mr. Clifford's permission, and I shall consider it a very hopeful sign if he grants it. The suffering you are now going through will, I trust, obtain you that, and more further on. Sacrifice is the law of answered prayer, and you, my child, have offered yourself as a ready victim. Go on in hope, and you will yet obtain all you ask."

Relieved by this long and happy interview, Teresa hardly felt how much it would cost her to make her intended request, until the encouraging presence of the kind Jesuit was over, and she was left alone; but true to her own prompt nature, she decided that no time was like the present time, and

wisely calculated that the longer she put it off the more she should suffer the pangs of suspense, in addition to the difficulty of doing it at last. Therefore, she was resolved it should be got over that evening, when her father came to sit with her after dinner.

Mr. Clifford had left the house before Father Netherby entered it; and on first mounting his horse had put him to a brisk trot down the park and along the road, till taking a bend to the right in the direction of the hills, he turned down a shady lane, which was a short cut to the Manor Grange.

The Manor Grange was a large, picturesque Elizabethan house, the property of Sir Hugh Redcliffe and his ancestors from time immemorial. It was built in red brick, with stone facings; it had gable-ends and tall twisted chimneys, a huge porch, and bay windows round which clambered the honeysuckle, the rose, and the white-tufted clematis, filling the warm air with perfume. There was a great deal of old oak wains-

coting, and richly-embossed ceilings; the rooms were low and rather dark; the corridors long and decidedly narrow; the fireplaces enormous, but emitting a doubtful amount of heat in proportion to their size, because the larger portion went up the chimney instead of into the room; not that our readers must gather from this that the Manor Grange was a cold, comfortless house. It had been, no doubt, in the days of the old Sir Hughs alternating with the Sir Cecils, who had lived there since the first creation of baronets, and long before as knights and simple esquires; but the present head of the family had adopted all the then modern improvements of stoves and pipes, and though the passages remained rather draughty, and it was usual for the baronet's wife of each generation to become rheumatic after a certain age (a sort of matter of course privilege of the family which she came into near the close of her married life as surely as she had come into the family jewels early in her youth on the

demise of the preceding baronet) ; yet, on the whole, few mansions of that day were more thoroughly warm, cosy, and comfortable than the Manor Grange. The present family consisted of Sir Hugh and Lady Redcliffe, their only son Cecil, who had come of age the preceding winter, and two fair, merry, thoroughly English girls, aged severally seventeen and eighteen, named Clara and Agnes.

The Redcliffes were, in one respect, the exact reverse of the Cliffords, for they scarcely ever left home. Once in four years, perhaps, the family had moved to London ; once in two years Sir Hugh had gone thither alone for six weeks, having settled all his worldly affairs accurately before leaving, and coming back with an enormous inlay of dresses, hats, fans, and fashions ; which were selected and carefully packed, accompanied by long accounts of how each article was to be made up and worn, by Sir Hugh's married sister, whose husband was constantly occupied in London ;

and consequently, both husband and wife were nearly as great fixtures in town as Sir Hugh and my lady were in the country. The intervening year when no one went to London, Lady Redcliffe and her daughters metamorphosed their last year's dresses in accordance with dear aunt Grace's clever descriptions, and sundry little pen and ink outlines filled in with water colours, destitute of much shading, but truly graphic, and having a sort of shadowing forth of artistic skill not quite to be despised even in our day. Every now and then the favour was reversed, and aunt Grace would come to gather a few real roses in exchange for the artificial ones that she had supplied from London.

A more genial, amiable, happy family could hardly be found than that at the Manor Grange. Cheerfulness, piety, generosity to the poor, and courtesy to all, seemed to be hereditary virtues, shared by all alike.

Sir Hugh was a broad-shouldered, power-

ful man, with a benign brow, and a ruddy cheek that spoke of health and constant out-of-door exercise. He had a full sonorous voice, was quick and elastic in his movements, he had a large strong hand, perhaps from the habit of much riding, and breaking in his own horses, but it was nevertheless a gentlemanly hand; and he had a small foot of which he was justly proud, and a remarkably neatly-turned ankle and leg, which all showed to great advantage in large gold buckles and silk stockings, when Sir Hugh led down the middle and up again at the opening dance of the annual Christmas ball given at the Manor Grange, the noblest lady in the house, or the most recent bride of the county.

Lady Redcliffe was a model country gentleman's wife. She adored her husband, slaved for her children, was bountiful to the poor, and very much occupied with her garden and poultry-yard. Hers was one of those large liberal natures that remind us of a wide-spreading tree in whose branches

countless birds find room to nestle, and beneath whose shade the timid flocks and herds seek shelter alike from rain and heat. For fifteen miles round people went to Lady Redcliffe when they wanted anything, whether the want was the knowledge of how to cure the whooping-cough, or how to make up an intricate family quarrel. She seemed always to take everybody's part, just because she had even-handed sympathy for all, and was never too square or too short in her judgment, but full of large allowances for each and overflowing charity. Sir Hugh was a little less liberal and a little more severe, but somehow his wife always won him round to her view ; and he was generally known to give in with a laughing assertion that on the whole he thought Lady Redcliffe rather preferred people who had got into some scrape, and that he believed the surest road to her compassion and affection was to have done something decidedly wrong. She would laugh in return and shake her head, and

say, "No, no, Sir Hugh, it is too bad of you to say that; only I am so sorry for them, and I do think they ought to be allowed another chance."

Some such remarks had been made the very morning of the day when Roger was on his way to Manor Grange, and his name had happened to come up in conversation. They had been talking of Lady Clifford's death, and of their own deep regret at her loss. Lady Redcliffe had announced her intention of going over to see Teresa, and was blaming herself for not having yet done it since she had been at the castle. Sir Hugh had muttered something rather disparaging about the ways of the castle in general, and the ways of its master in particular, and Lady Redcliffe had as usual taken up the cudgels in his defence, and assured them all that for her part she very much pitied Mr. Clifford. He had been left all alone, poor man, in the castle so long; his wife dead, and his daughter at school. Perhaps things had not been altogether

what they might have been (she generally used "might" and "could" where other people put "should" and "must"), but now Teresa had come home, of course it would be all right and proper. She thought the county people had been very uncharitable in listening to silly stories and throwing out extraordinary hints. She really did not know what people would take into their heads next. If Mr. Bethune never did get back to Paris, she supposed he got back somewhere else; and, after all, what business was it of anybody's where Mr. Bethune got to? For her part, she could not imagine what it all meant, and she should like very much to see Mr. Clifford, and at all events, she should go and see that poor motherless girl. In short, Mr. Clifford having been so fortunate as to be attacked in Lady Redcliffe's presence, had immediately gained in her a warm friend and a zealous supporter.

It was exactly what he wanted at that particular moment—not for himself, poor unhappy man! but for Teresa. And it was

in the hope of finding a friend in Lady Redcliffe that he had broken through his reserve and recent shyness with his neighbours, and rode up to the door to ask, not for Sir Hugh, but for Lady Redcliffe.

Roger had left the house simply with the intention of getting out of Father Netherby's way, and so avoiding any awkwardness; but the announcement that Teresa wished him sent for had set him musing about many things in connection with his little daughter, and his own position as her sole surviving parent. He was a great deal more seriously impressed with the responsibility of having a young girl to care for than he had ever been in his life before about any single duty. He did not view the question in the simple, hopeful way that a good Christian father would have done, but he intricated it in his own mind with the reflections of a man of the world and a philosopher. He considered Teresa in the light of a phenomenon of the youthful female sex placed under his care. He moralised upon the

condition, he mused upon the idiosyncrasies of women in the abstract. He recalled all he had read and all that his own experience had shown him. The mental faculties, the imagination, the tendencies, the susceptibilities, and the requirements of women were all sorted and arranged in his mind with wonderful erudition and logical accuracy; and the result of all these ethical reflections, brought to bear with powerful focus on the one unconscious little girl who came practically beneath his observation, was that the poor philosopher had got completely puzzled between his theories and his one *exemplaria*.

This mental condition had not declared itself when Teresa first returned home. He had taken her arrival partly as a matter of course, partly as a doubtful joy; but when he found Teresa occupying much of his time, and more of his thoughts, when he found that to have a beautiful and intelligent daughter of eighteen always present was not a mere accident in a man's life, but,

forsooth, a very serious and absorbing fact, forthwith the student and the philosopher seized upon it for dissection and microscopic inquiry, and called in all science and all learning to aid. And when, added to this, the *father* found his affections very seriously enlisted in favour of his specimen, the study became altogether the most interesting, and certainly the most anxious, in which he had ever been engaged.

The unexpected display of sensibility in Teresa, on hearing the sad news of her aunt's death, and, above all, this new development of wanting to see the priest, had quickened his apprehensions and added to his bewilderment. What, if his beautiful and romantic daughter were to fall a victim to religious mania? What, if deprived of all intercourse with equals of her own sex, she were to grow peculiar and eccentric? What, if deprived of all society of the other sex, save in the person of her own philosophical father, she were to become melancholy and morbid? Terror upon terror

grew before him, till at length he resolved (and that, as our readers have seen, after very brief deliberation) upon calling to his aid the large motherly heart of Lady Redcliffe, with her two buxom, strong nerved, absolutely healthy daughters. And perhaps Roger was not altogether oblivious of a certain good-looking Cecil Redcliffe forming an important member of the household, and who might perhaps prove not only an auxiliary, but in himself at once the complete remedy, the perfect cure, the infallible antidote, and everything else that was desirable.

How little was our heroine aware, in her pious, self-oblivious conversation with Father Netherby, exclusively occupied as she was with questions connected with her duties and her poor father's highest welfare, of the curious psychological conclusions to which that same father's anxiety about her was leading him. She would not have understood them even could they have been put before her.

When Roger entered the morning-room of the Manor Grange, Lady Redcliffe came forward to meet him with her kindest smile pervading her somewhat sun-burnt but not unhandsome face, and both hands extended. There was reason enough in her mind for any amount of affectionate warmth. Of course he was in sorrow for his sister-in-law's death. Moreover, the neighbours had lately been uncongenial and inhospitable, and had put about ugly reports respecting him ; and, finally, there was his poor little motherless daughter to be thought of ; and no doubt he wanted to talk with her about the dear girl. So that altogether Roger Clifford was at that moment a much more interesting individual in Lady Redcliffe's eyes than he had ever been before. Another reason was, that Lady Redcliffe had tact enough to have found out that when people first meet their friends after they have themselves been in trouble, they always feel shy and conscious, at least if they happen to be English. And the

only way to set them at their ease is to be very much so yourself, while, at the same time, by throwing a little extra affection into your manner, you give them to understand that your cheeriness does not at all arise from indifference or want of sympathy, but is, in fact, the intended expression of both. Lady Redcliffe's kind-hearted manœuvre succeeded perfectly. The proud, reserved Roger had in less than a quarter of an hour opened up the full chapter of his anxieties about Teresa, and effectually left upon Lady Redcliffe's mind the impression that Teresa was decidedly falling into a nervous state, and that change of air and cheerful society were of imminent importance. It was speedily settled, that as soon as she was well enough to be removed she should re-visit her old friends at the Manor Grange. The girls had not met since they were all children, but as they had then seen a great deal of each other, they could not be considered strangers.

Roger rode back to the castle extremely

proud of his success. He was rather elated at thinking he had acted as a good father and an astute philosopher might be expected to act. He had played his part admirably as both. He had prepared a pleasant and very desirable change for his daughter. Lady Redcliffe was a sensible woman for a young girl to be with. There were young companions of about her own age, and somewhere in the background—not wanted just yet, because he certainly could not part with Teresa, but available for some future time, and therefore not to be lost sight of—there was that Cecil Redcliffe—a handsome young man, and heir to a good fortune; and Roger smiled to himself as he became conscious that his speculations were taking a matrimonial turn.

On his return, he found Teresa much more cheerful, and assuring him she intended coming down to dinner (for the first time since her illness), if she might be allowed a sofa instead of a chair, so as not to have to sit up the whole of the time, as

she was still very weak. Roger was delighted. He had grown tired of his solitary meals, and could not understand how he had borne with so many before Teresa came ; and with his late-developed domestic feelings, he was pleased with the degree of small attention that his daughter's invalid state necessitated on his part. So when dinner was on the table, escorted down-stairs by Mademoiselle Julie, Teresa appeared at the open door ; her step was a little uncertain, her complexion more transparent than ever, she was dressed in floating robes of white muslin, and her feet were thrust into little black satin slippers. She had wisely avoided (by the excuse of not making a regular evening toilet) the necessity of appearing in mourning for the first time she came down-stairs, for she had heard her father say how much he disliked to see young people in deep black, and Teresa had long ago found out how alive Roger was to all outward impressions which might disturb his taste or shock his prejudices.

As for Roger, he felt the charmed sympathy of a man who till then had never learnt to appreciate all the tender interest of a gentlewoman's presence, and experienced, almost for the first time, the quiet domestic poetry of refined life that he had so ruthlessly neglected in his youth.

Teresa chatted in a lively tone, rejoiced at being again down-stairs and able to take part in her father's life. The deep shadow that had fallen on her young heart seemed to have rolled partially away, and her moral energies had been braced and invigorated during the long, enforced silence and solitude of her sick room. But hidden in her heart lay the request she had to proffer, and the fixed resolve that nothing should prevent her seizing this opportune moment for making the great effort to bring again under that roof the religious privileges to which, from time immemorial, Raymond Castle had been entitled, and which her delicate health rendered so important to herself. It was decided that when dinner

was over Teresa should not make the exertion of going into the drawing-room, but have her sofa rolled into the large bay window near the round table, and her father's arm-chair placed on the other side. The evening was warm and still; through the open windows the perfume of a large bed of double-stocks stole into the room. The view was in the direction of the hills to the north, and amid the thick fern where the deer were browsing, Teresa could see the little footpath across the turf she had been in the habit of treading every morning on her way to early mass. It was the short cut to church, and there were wooden steps over the park palings instead of a gate, as it was in fact not a recognised road at all, and existed chiefly for the convenience of gamekeepers and gardeners coming to and from the castle. She looked at the little sinuous line just visible on the grass, dreamily and sadly, while the fear of broaching the subject grew in her thoughts, and being still weak and ill, brought a bright

hectic spot in her cheeks. Roger was watching her. She was conscious of it, and looking up, their eyes met. She smiled, and answering the expression of his face rather than his words, for he had not spoken, she said :

“I was thinking, papa, how many more days it would be before I should be well enough to be wending my way to church by eight in the morning ; and I want to know, dear father, if you would let me have mass said in the oratory here ? Father Netherby says he will come if you will allow it.”

She paused, and for a moment there was no answer. A deep red stain rather than a blush spread over Roger's brow, and fading away, left his countenance livid. At length, in a voice choking with emotion, he said, “Teresa, you don't know what you ask.”

With one hand he shaded his eyes, the other dropped by his side. In an instant she had noiselessly slipped from her sofa, and kneeling by his chair, had raised that hand to her lips.

“Forgive me, dear father; I have given you pain; why or how I do not know; but this I know, *I* am in sorrow;” and her voice trembled a little, “and *you* are in sorrow, or *have* been. Let the great Consoler come and comfort us both.”

Oh, agony! oh, horror!—not a hundred yards away there was that closed room, within whose locked doors, beneath whose broken floor lay hid that well, and *what was in it*. The dark deed of that night, and the deathless remorse that had followed it, awoke in the memory of the wretched man with tenfold force, as the sudden thought of the robed priest and the white Host elevated again in that blood-stained house, swept before his mental vision: Mildred, in her fair, neglected youth, kneeling as he had seen her in that little sanctuary of her inner life, the oratory she had made for herself! Mildred, dead and buried far away! The long years that, godless and alone, the ambitious and mammon-loving man had hurried through the length and breadth of

Europe, the associate of infidels, the friend and admirer of Voltaire, the boon-companion of profligates—all glared upon his seared conscience, and now tempted him to deny his faith, and to renounce his God. But the very hatred proved that he believed; and though Roger had scoffed with the scoffer, and sneered with the philosopher, yet beneath all that there was the faith that makes the devils tremble, and which then, and often, convulsed his whole being with dread and terror. Roger would perhaps have made a more complete unbeliever had he been less of a criminal; if all his life he had carried on the lie of stolid respectability clothed in worldly success, his cold nature might have stood unshaken to the end, and presented to the world and himself the appearance of integrity, while the demons of Selfishness and Pride, Luxury Avarice, were having it all to themselves in the soul's depths below.

But the horror of his crime, while of course it separated him farther from grace,

awoke in him a full sense of moral consciousness. He might have gone on, slipping decorously into hell, if he had never hurt his own opinion of himself by a deed which no creed, or absence of creed, was ever found to warrant—the midnight murder of his friend, and guest, in his own house. And then those gentle words, from those innocent lips still pressed upon his hand, “Let the great Consoler come and comfort us both.” Comfort to him! Ah! what could she know of the comfort he needed, and of how impossible it was he should find it. Teresa was afraid to speak again, neither did she like to drop the hand she held in her own and leave him. She was but his child, and dared not question him; but she was a woman too, and she could not turn aside from a weeping man. Two suppressed groans escaped his lips; they were like sobs, and gently giving one pressure of the little fingers lying in his grasp, Roger rose abruptly and left the room. Teresa, frightened and distressed,

remained sitting on the floor by her father's chair; her head hid in her hands, praying silently. She sat listening. She heard her father's step echoing through the long gallery and pass into his study, and then all was silent. The room grew dark as the shadows of the trees and browsing deer lengthened on the grass; and the breath of the flowers, damp with the evening dew, came clinging round her white-draped form as she sat crouching on the ground like a little white rabbit.

Presently the door opened gently, and in the shadow at the end of the room away from the window, Teresa saw the dark figure of her father. He stopped short when his eyes fell upon her figure on the ground:

"Teresa," he said in a low husky voice, "are you ill?"

She rose with difficulty, for, though not ill, she was shaken by the violence of emotion in her still convalescent state, and approached him.

“No, dear father, but I have made you angry, and I am unhappy.”

“You do not know what you have asked, Teresa ; but you have not made me angry. Let it be as you wish, my dear child, and the sooner the better ; but say no more to me about it.”

In a moment the two little white arms were round his neck, and the young face, wet with happy tears, bent upon his shoulder. Then one long kiss was pressed by those fresh lips on his cold pale cheek ; and, with the quick tact of her exquisite sensibility, she spoke playfully and sweetly :

“And now, dear father, please to see your poor little daughter safe under *Maiselle* Julie’s care, for I am not over strong, and am very tired with my first attempt at dining out.”

He led her away himself up the great oak staircase with the painted window ; and the angels’ wings and the gold halo round the saints’ heads, and the image of the Crucified, threw rich deep hues over Teresa’s white

dress and Roger's blanched face, as they passed beneath the storied window. Oh, happy token !

The weariness had all died out of Teresa's eyes long before she closed them for sleep, and the colour had come back to her cheek, when, sending for Mrs. Brown, she communicated to her the happy intelligence that she had obtained her request. Though late for Teresa's invalid habits, it was not really more than an hour after sunset ; and therefore Mrs. Brown had no hesitation in promising to go at once down to Father Netherby and beg he would be at the castle at half-past eight the following morning. Teresa wanted herself to aid in preparing the oratory, and laying out the long-disused vestments. But Mrs. Brown would not allow her thus to fatigue herself ; and promising that the best flowers should be culled from the conservatory and hothouse for the altar, she left her satisfied and happy, almost too happy for sleep.

None but the oldest servants in the

family had ever seen mass performed in the castle before. It was a surprise to the younger members, and a cause of thankful tears to the older dependants who had watched the decay of all the practices of religion in that sad house ever since Mrs. Clifford's death. The voice of the old Jesuit father trembled a little with many emotions as he commenced. With the exception of Vincenzo, there was not one servant absent who could possibly be spared from house, stables, or garden. Teresa knelt at the prie-dieu, to the right of the altar. There was another to the left which neither she nor any other inmate of the house expected would be occupied. But before the priest had mounted the altar-step the door of the oratory opened, and the tall figure of Roger Clifford, paler than ever, and with sternly compressed lips, quietly entered and knelt at the vacant prie-dieu. Teresa knew by instinct what had happened. She did not look round, but bent her head lower, and finally hid her face in her hands

to conceal the tears of joy that she could not restrain.

Thus had the innocent influence of one young, loving heart gained in a half-unconscious way, a great victory over the earthly ambition that for years had been inducing Roger gradually to slip out of the old faith, in the hope of ultimately establishing his house in the favour of the new dynasty, and of rising in the world; and—harder still—over the unrepenting remorse of a darkened heart; at least so far as to bring about the first step towards a return to faith and hope.

As Roger left the oratory Vincenzo appeared in the long corridor, officiously bringing the morning letters on a salver to meet his master. Roger took the letters in silence, and avoided meeting the man's eyes, which were fixed on his master's face with a sinister expression of mingled scorn and fear.

Teresa's recovery progressed rapidly from this hour, and she was in no hurry to leave

her father and profit by Lady Redcliffe's invitation. Her mind was more at rest than it had been since her return home; and even the dark shadow of her aunt's death was so irradiated with new hopes about her father, that it could no longer overpower the wonderful elasticity of her natural character. She contrived upon one excuse or another, to remain long enough to have seen it pass into a custom that mass should be said in the house and all the servants attend; and the result was that the unhappy Roger not unfrequently was seen there also.

However, at length, after many protestations to her father as to her dislike to leave him, and many assurances that she did not require any change, she was induced to consent to pay the promised visit. Roger took her himself: and when it came to the parting, and Sir Hugh and Lady Redcliffe standing by, saw the intense affection with which Teresa in all her self-possessed gracefulness, gently stirred but never agitated,

took leave of her father ; and Lady Redcliffe noticed the way that grave man watched her out of those deep solemn eyes of his as they all stood at the hall-door, while he prepared to drive off, she put her hand on her husband's shoulder and whispered in his ear :

“ I cannot think how anybody can have a very bad opinion of a man who is so beloved by such a daughter as that, and who so loves in return. Such a holy influence must end in being his salvation.”

CHAPTER III.

FRASCATI AND THE MANOR GRANGE.

THE long hot summer months passed slowly and tediously to Lord Clifford and Rose, in the Episcopal Palace at Frascati. The house itself, dignified with the name of palace because it belonged to the Cardinal Bishop, had none of the grandeur and splendour we usually associate with that high-sounding appellation. The entrance was in one of the narrow, almost squalid streets of the town; and as the object of going into the country with Italians is chiefly to get away from the unwholesome air of Rome, and to see as little of the sun as possible — the windows, which might

have commanded that view almost unrivalled in beauty, were placed too high for any one sitting in the apartment to see anything out of them but the cloudless sky. Each morn it unfolded its stainless blue as noon drew on, then the transparent veil of the finest white mist floated over the deep azure. Later on, as evening approached, the mist grew into huge volumes of white silver cloud, piled like mountains, and stretching along the horizon in billowy forms, vast and varied. Later still, the hot sun, in royal glory of purple and gold, sank majestically behind the far-off dome of St. Peter's that stood out dark and solemn against that vivid background, and dipped into his watery bed on the red-tinted waves of the tideless sea; leaving the huge cloud-mountains dyed in the deepest crimson, flaming with red forests, and gleaming with lakes of molten silver. In the evening up rose the moon in her chaste simplicity, and put to flight the gorgeous phantasmagoria; leaving all the beautiful

pageant to fade away into what seemed endless regions of faint green and blue sky-land. Night drew on, and the billowy clouds gathered again black and menacing. The booming thunder seemed to call up its hoarse voice from amid the deep ravines of the Abruzzi, or from the lofty peaks of solitary Soracte. On it came, unrolling its terrors, till the whole air was filled with awful sound like a mighty Presence; and suddenly the lightning scattered its characters of silver over the sea and the sleeping land, waking up a thousand objects into vision clear and vivid, like a thought of the awfulness of God shed suddenly on an unconscious world. But down again into the deep-rooted mountains, or the fathomless sea the voice of the storm had dropped, and for a few moments all lay in utter darkness and utter silence, till again the mysterious messenger wakes up in thunder and in glare, and repeats his wordless prophecies far into the shuddering night.

Thus the angelic architects and landscape-painters of the sky blazon forth the glories of creation above the plains of the Eternal City, and round the dark dome of the great cathedral of the world.

Lord Clifford had fallen into the dreamy inactivity of a man who from an overwhelming sorrow finds himself suddenly stranded on the shores of life, and feels that chart and pilot are lost, while the waters idly lap the beams of his useless vessel. There are some minds to whom sorrow, far more than joy, is an incentive to fresh action. In the dirge of each buried hope their quick ear detects a trumpet-call to be up and doing. They are souls who have an overwhelming sense of the awful responsibility of life, and of the claims of the Divine Master. As the affections of life drop from time to time into the grave, or—ah! far sadder still—into the bitterer death of separation and estrangement, they count one shackle less to earth, one link nearer to heaven. The depth of their anguish is the altitude of

their courage. They rally so soon, they live on so vigorous, that common men call them unfeeling, just as the crumbling sandstone might call the diamond hard. One beat of a heart like that is worth twenty flutters of a weaker nature. They are the stuff the saints are made of. Let us shade our eyes, and praise the God of the strong—Lord Clifford was not among them. He had never known (how should he, seeing he could not fathom her character), how much of his force was derived from the rich glowing nature of the gifted wife he had lost. His grief was not passionate — passion is seldom long-lived; but it had crushed him. In time he would have rallied and possibly married again, as such men do. But other causes combined to keep him inert and languid. The climate of Italy was ill-adapted to his thorough Saxon constitution, and was really undermining his health while he attributed his increasing languor to purely mental causes.

Madame de Bray, who was a remarkably

keen, clear-sighted woman, was perfectly aware of the state of the case; and was very anxious for Lord Clifford's own sake, as well as for Rose's, that he should return to his own country. But it was not till far into the month of September that she could persuade him to leave Italy. He clung to it as the birthplace of his beloved Angela, as the scene where he had first known and loved her, and as the land to which he had consigned her dear remains. Grief reveals a vein of poetry in many a heart which joy had left to its natural prose. And this was what had happened in Lord Clifford's character. No one who had only known him as the frank, fair, gentlemanly lord of Nutley Hall, the descendant of Saxon kings, with the cheery light of his ancestors' blue eyes, and the gay shining of their golden-tinted locks duly descended to his own handsome face, would have supposed there could lurk that pathetic sadness in his heart which had reduced him to a melancholy dreamer. Ah, well! He who is

the God of the strong, is also the Father of the weak. It would not be well if oaks were the only trees. The hyssop that grows upon the wall has its appointed place and lends its aid to grace the world; and if there were no clinging ivy even the oak would lose its best ornament.

Madame de Bray had, of course, been in correspondence with the Princess Orsini ever since poor Angela's pen had lain idly by. And to the princess she had communicated all her apprehensions. Both the prince and princess had written again and again to beg Lord Clifford would join them in Florence; but finding their entreaties did not induce him to move, they were resolved to try what their presence might do, and with a wonderful stretch of friendship had resolved upon braving a few days of the intense heat of August in Rome, so as to be able to see Lord Clifford, and if possible carry him back with them. Their arrival was fixed for somewhere in the third week of August.

And meanwhile, Madame de Bray, who was always on the look-out for some slight change of scene for Rose (and perhaps for herself too), had obtained permission to take Rose to Rome for the Feast of the Assumption, that they might witness the giving of the Papal Benediction from the balcony of St. Peter's.

They had decided upon spending a long morning in that inexhaustible treasure-house of devotional and beautiful images, the Basilica itself; intending a short time before twelve to go out upon the steps, and so mingling with the crowd, which in that vast space is never excessive, see at once the venerable figure of the Pope, and the varied groups of the kneeling populace below. Their carriage was to wait for them in the Piazza.

Rose Clifford by education and habits was half a Roman, and she moved about the great Basilica with the pious familiarity of a child of the house; reverent but unembarrassed, simple and free. She

had been in the habit of frequently sitting there for hours, accompanied by Madame de Bray, with a book in her hand; and diversifying her studies with little excursions to the various altars, or wandering round to examine the mosaics, and to accustom her eye to the wonderfully beautiful details which escape the notice of those who have not lived enough in St. Peter's to have become at home with its countless riches.

They had been thus engaged on the morning of the 15th of August. The delicious even temperature within the walls of the Basilica had been refreshing after the scorching heat of the drive from their hotel.

They had joined the groups of worshippers during the masses that were going on at the various side-altars, and which always impress the stranger with such a sentiment of its being genuine real devotion, partly from the unceremonious and picturesque way in which, in the absence

of all benches or chairs, each assistant falls on his knees on the marble pavement, while from a distance the whole presents a picture of many colours and varied groupings, animating the vast temple, and yet neither taking from its repose, nor encumbering its space.

The great clock of St. Peter's had rung out a quarter to twelve. In another quarter of an hour the blessing uttered in the thrilling voice of the venerable pontiff, would float through the clear air and sink into the hearts of all near, and many far away, who though not within hearing of it live expectant of heaven's gifts, like far-off fields waiting thirstily for the coming shower.

Five minutes before mid-day they stood on the steps of the Basilica. Deep silence fell upon that countless multitude. The actual stillness was so great that the eyes almost deceived the ears into mistaking the quivering of the dazzling sun-rays for a sound, confusing in one sensation the

vibrations of light with the vibrations of air—an impression on the sister senses which is not unusual.

The silence was short. The brief blessing was cast upon the winds in the solemn words consecrated by antiquity, and uttered by an aged man; and then the momentarily-arrested flow of sound and movement burst its short restraint, and chattered and buzzed all the more for the little interval of awe-struck repose.

The crowd began to move on, and the anxious eyes of Madame de Bray and Rose were searching for the servant, whom they had told to stand in a particular spot that they might easily find him when they wanted the carriage. But nowhere was he to be seen, and as the mid-day heat was intense Madame de Bray was afraid of Rose being long exposed to the perpendicular rays of the sun in a sky without a cloud.

She was still vainly endeavouring to discover Lord Clifford's English livery

amongst the maze of costumed peasants and Roman footmen, when a young man came forward quickly, and bowing to Madame de Bray and to Rose, took the proffered hand of the English maiden, accustomed only to the ordinary salutation of her country, and raised it to his lips.

Rose blushed like the deepest crimson of her own namesake, and asked Andrea where he had come from, as she did not know he was in Rome?

“I only arrived late last night, and I too, did not know you were here. My father and mother are to arrive early next week, and I have come on first to see some arrangements carried out for them. My mother’s carriage is here, Rose, and as Madame de Bray cannot detect yours in the crowd, nor can I see it, you will allow me to put ours at your disposal. .

Madame de Bray was enchanted. She was glad to see a way out of their difficulties, and glad to meet Andrea, while to hear the two young people calling each

other unconsciously by their christian names, as they had done from their cradle upwards, nourished in the good lady's heart her cherished hopes for her pupil, and made her foresee the prospect of Lady Clifford's living and dying wishes being realised.

With the true chivalry of high breeding, it was to Madame de Bray that Andrea Orsini offered his arm to lead her down the long flight of easy steps, and not the younger lady, to where his carriage was standing in the Piazza. The three footmen with cocked-hats and gold-mounted canes, let down the ponderous steps of the richly emblazoned and decorated old Roman family-coach, and Rose's little figure tripped lightly up, after madame was seated. Andrea followed, and took one long, happy gaze, at the fair face opposite him, as they drove away to the hotel where Miss Clifford was stopping. He thought he had never seen anything more lovely than the spotless purity of Rose's complexion, heightened by the folds of her lace veil, and her deep mourning.

The heavy black horses, for which Rome is famous, trotted in slow state through the winding streets; it did not become them to compromise their dignity by unseemly haste, and as they leant their heads towards each other, and occasionally shook the heavy knots of their plaited and braided manes, they seemed to be conferring together upon the unexpected presence in the carriage of the two strange ladies, and were evidently bent upon mentally supporting the dignity of the Orsinis by the uniform tramp of their well-trained pace; while their glossy black coats shone through the cumbrous and heavily-embossed harness.

Meanwhile, Madame de Bray had been aiding the timid wishes of the two young people, by telling Andrea that she was sure Lord Clifford would be glad to see him at Frascati. And then, authorized by the superior judgment of her chaperone, Rose had explained to him that they were to drive back late that evening, so that she

could prepare her father to receive him the following day. He arranged to ride over very early in the morning, before the great heat began, and after resting a while at the hotel, to come to breakfast at twelve at the Episcopal Palace.

He accompanied the ladies to the door of their apartment, and then, as further delay would have been contrary to etiquette until he had paid his respects to Lord Clifford and received his permission to call; he again kissed the little hand that crept, this time rather furtively, into his, and left them.

Rose had a sweet siesta and happy dreams, in which the great clock of St. Peter rang out a merry chime, instead of striking twelve. When she looked up to the balcony it was Andrea who appeared in the place of the Pope. It is true he gave no benediction, but she felt his eyes fall full upon her face as she stood in the crowd, and that seemed to do quite as well. Then, somehow or other, she came home

in a cardinal's carriage, and as it rained, the cardinal held his scarlet umbrella over her head, and she arrived not at the door of her hotel, but at Frascati, where her own dear mother and Andrea received her at the door, with open arms. Her mother kissed her, and said, "I have waited for this."

Rose awoke with tears on her cheeks, very happy, but wondering what it all meant. And there stood Madame de Bray with a cup of coffee in her hand for Rose to drink, and a face all smiles; but yet that looked as if she too, had been weeping.

Lord Clifford was glad to have his darling back again, and though he said but little he was evidently pleased at the prospect of seeing Andrea. It may be doubtful how far the latter had effectually carried out whatever arrangements had called him to Rome as his parents' "avant courier," for his first visit to Frascati was not the only one he found leisure to pay before their arrival.

It must however be acknowledged that they seemed perfectly satisfied when they came, with the way in which he had spent his time, and the day after they reached Rome they all three went to Frascati. The prince was the first to break upon the solitude of the poor widower, and the manly earnest sympathy of his friend seemed to impart vigour to Lord Clifford's drooping spirits. It was more trying to meet the princess, Angela's friend, but that too, did him good, as it made an opening for him to utter all the pathetic tenderness of his grief by dwelling on a thousand touching details, which, next to himself, no one could better appreciate than the princess. The friends spent a week together in the peaceful interchange of sympathy, sometimes frankly uttered, but more generally only appearing under cover of general friendship and interest. It was the first time that Lord Clifford had seemed to realise the fact that life had in nowise come to an end because the grave had

robbed him of his companion. And by degrees he began to converse with the prince about their mutual political interests, his own country, and his speedy return thither. One day the princess, finding him more readily led into the latter train of thought than usual, ventured to propose, that, the weather being now somewhat cooler after the succession of thunderstorms and the rain that generally follows the middle of August, they should all travel together as far as Florence, and he remain with them until he felt able to return to England. She had, with a woman's tact, hit upon exactly the moment when, without being himself conscious of it, he was waiting for some external impulse to lift him out of the groove into which he had sunk, and consequently the idea was no sooner suggested than he was impatient to put it in execution, and before thirty-six hours had elapsed the whole party were on their route to Florence.

Many and long were the confidential

discourses held by the princess and Madame de Bray upon the question of the marriage of Rose and Andrea. At first both the princess and her husband had been of opinion that the moment had come when the latter should speak openly on the subject to Lord Clifford, and the affair be decided between the parents, as was the custom in those times and in families of that position. But when the princess perceived the morbid state of feeling into which Lord Clifford had for the present fallen, she thought that they would run considerable risk by putting anything before him which would suggest another loss and another separation. She questioned Madame de Bray as to her former fears (and which had always been expressed by Lady Clifford) that he might, in case of his own death before Rose was married, appoint her uncle Roger her guardian. But to her relief she found Madame de Bray not entertaining this apprehension to the extent she had done formerly. In the first place, the pro-

babilities were in favour of Rose being married before very long, while Lord Clifford's health, though failing was not such as to lead any one to suppose he was likely to die in the prime of life. Moreover, in Madame de Bray's opinion, the sort of cloud under which Roger Clifford had lately fallen made her count it an impossibility that Lord Clifford should run any risk of compromising his daughter's interests by naming as her guardian a relation whose own character stood even less well in public opinion than formerly. But although satisfied on this point, the princess had considerable difficulty in bringing herself to consent that the present opportunity should be allowed to pass. Madame de Bray appreciated the extreme sensitiveness of Lord Clifford's character better than the princess was likely to do. And she also better knew that that sensitiveness was not unmingled with selfishness, as is the case with all morbid persons ; and consequently, that the thought of even his darling Rose's

future welfare would hardly plead sufficient excuse with him for the cruelty of threatening him with losing her, or the barbarity of talking of marriage over the recently closed grave of his departed wife. Little did he think that, while following the instincts of his own grief, he was avoiding exactly that course of action which his beloved Angela would most have approved and desired.

Once stirred from his seclusion, he seemed as little able to settle again as he had previously been to leave Frascati, and the home sickness seized him as soon as he found himself out of reach of the city that Angela had so loved, and the old feudal castle with its wild lake near which she lay buried. He could hardly be persuaded to spend a week in Florence before he set out on his journey to England. He obtained a promise from the Orsinis (never to be fulfilled) that they would come to him the following spring; and at least when he left them, his friends had the satisfaction

of seeing him roused from the stupor of his sorrow, and looking forward with conscientious intentions, if not with much energy to his still remaining duties in his own land.

Teresa's visit to the Manor Grange would have filled Roger Clifford with satisfaction could he have seen how matters were progressing. Indeed, had this been quite possible, he probably would have expected much greater and altogether different results from any which the course of our history will have to describe. If he could have watched the growing colour in her cheeks, and seen the expression of peace and cheerfulness in her bright eyes every morning as she took her place at the breakfast-table, affectionately welcomed by Lady Redcliffe and her daughters, he would have felt doubly proud of his child; while his half-acknowledged matrimonial scheming would have gained strength could he have noted the way in which she was received by young Cecil, and heard the hearty good-

humour with which Sir Hugh day by day gave utterance to his satisfaction at her improved looks, which seemed each morning to strike him with increased delight, and which, claiming the privilege of being old enough to be her father, he expressed so unreservedly as to heighten very greatly the beautiful blush he was so glad to find had stolen into those once marble cheeks.

Teresa was thoroughly happy, save perhaps for a little anxious feeling about her father, and some fears that her presence at home would be missed in more ways than one. She found at the Manor Grange all that she so much wanted at home. There was the vigorous energy of happy domestic life—the parents indulgent and devoted, the children affectionate and respectful. It was a thorough picture of a good old English family, rich in sterling virtues and in mutual affection. The superior refinement and exquisite grace of Teresa gave just the one touch of light that was wanted, and made her seem like some brilliant jewel set

in massive gold. She herself was utterly unconscious of the effect she produced. From her own higher sphere she beamed down on the entranced admiration of the son of the house, like "some bright particular star," whose one business it was to shine, and who did it as a matter of course, without premeditation or afterthought. She was graceful, because it was as natural to her to be so as to a fawn. She was arch, because she had a keen sense of humour; and she was at times beautifully pathetic, because her heart was steeped in heavenly thoughts, and the dew of divine grace distilled like nectar in her well-ordered speech.

Before she had been there a fortnight, both Sir Hugh and Lady Redcliffe began to perceive the effect she was producing in their domestic circle, and though both were pleased it should be so, they were too completely in the dark as to her own feelings towards their only son, to be quite easy at seeing the deep impression she was making

on his affections. He had not, indeed, spoken a word to his parents; but they were far too genial themselves, had too lively a recollection of what it was to be young—and, to say the truth, were even now too much in love with each other not to have a full perception of the hidden drama that was being carried on in poor Cecil's heart. So it came to pass, that late one night, after all had retired to rest, Sir Hugh and Lady Redcliffe held counsel together in dressing gown and slippers, over the embers of a fire, such as at the close of a very wet day in July is not always amiss in our chill land.

“What do you think, my dear Harriet,” began Sir Hugh, “about our pretty little guest? She is a charming girl, and as good as she is pretty; but do you think that she has any idea of the havoc she is making with Cecil? You know that dear boy is as transparent as a trout stream. I can see the whole progress of the malady going on, though he has no idea that I see

anything. I am sorry to say he has got past the blushing stage, and the time for making pretty speeches, and he is rapidly sinking into the pale, silent, woe-begone lover. What is to be done? Do you think the little puss knows the mischief she has done?"

"That I am sure she does not," replied Lady Redcliffe; "she is as innocent of it as a child. I wish she did know, or at least that she guessed it, because then there would be some chance of finding out whether she likes our Cecil enough to marry him. But really, as matters are now, I should be afraid she has realized it so little that if the thing were put before her she would just start away like a frightened bird, and we should lose her altogether?"

"Then you wish it, my lady, do you?" said Sir Hugh, slyly.

"Yes, I wish it, my dear Hugh; I wish it very much; but I am doubtful whether it will ever be, though I cannot give a reason for my doubt."

"You surely do not think that Mr. Clifford would object?" said Sir Hugh.

"Certainly not. He must have known what he was about when he sent his daughter here. It was hardly the sort of thing a mother would have done. She, at least, would have come herself. But it is exactly what one might expect from a helpless man left to take care of an only daughter. When he spoke to me about Teresa's coming here for change of scene, I felt quite flattered by the confidence he reposed in us, but I thought it but right to drop a hint in the course of conversation that Cecil was stopping at home."

"And what did he reply?"

"That he was very glad to hear it; and so after that there was nothing more to be said. I thought to myself, perhaps he wishes it; and now I know Teresa, I am sure I wish it; and so there it is! Only I don't think the girl has the smallest idea of anything of the sort."

"Cannot we say anything just to turn

her thoughts in that direction, my dear Harriet—something of a hint, you know, that will make her look about her?”

“Oh, no, my dear Hugh; I would not on any account do anything of the kind. It will all come in time. You are like a person wanting to force open a rosebud—you will only spoil it. Leave Teresa to find out the enigma for herself, or to learn it first from dear Cecil. Though I think before that happens you had better get at Mr. Clifford’s full sentiments on the subject.”

“Really, my dear Harriet, I think you are rather hard upon Cecil; you refuse to lend him a helping hand, and you seem to think he is to wait and waste away, and all that Miss Teresa may be left to break hearts with as much *sang-froid* as she would an egg-shell.

Lady Redcliffe laughed.

“Indeed I am not hard upon him; on the contrary, my heart aches for him, poor lad, and I am only waiting for an oppor-

tunity to encourage him by telling him how much you and I approve of Miss Clifford; but from what I perceive of Teresa's character I do not think we shall gain anything by precipitating matters. She is still much absorbed by her sorrow for her aunt's death. She has a very lofty idea of her duty to her father, who, as she says, has no one in the world but her, for Robert is no comfort to anybody. She has only been in her father's house a few months, and taken up as she is with those two feelings, I do not think she is in a state to admit of any rival sentiment just now. There is plenty of time, dear Hugh; she is only eighteen, and dear Cecil is only two-and-twenty."

"And pray, my dear Harriet, when did you and I marry? I thought, so far as my poor memory serves me, that we were exactly that age when we came to the conviction that we could not live another day apart."

"You are quite right, dear Hugh, and my experience has certainly not taught me

to fear early marriages; but the present case is a peculiar one, and, I think, will require patience."

"I will be as patient as I can, my dear wife. I only hope I shall not let the cat out of the bag some day when Miss Teresa's beautiful serenity, and poor Cecil's awkward restlessness are putting me beside myself."

And so the matter was left to rest a little longer. Clara and Agnes were as well aware as their mother could be of what was passing in Cecil's mind, and without by a word or a look intruding upon his secret, they were for ever managing that he should take part in their walks, and rides, and amusements. Teresa took it all as a proof of the great affection that reigned in that happy family, and never for a moment imagined her presence had anything to do with it. The consequence was she showed not only no opposition, but fell in with their plans as simply as if she had been a third sister, and so took part in their arrangements with her frank, sweet manner, all the

while nourishing in the hidden depths of her beautiful soul high thoughts of God, low thoughts of herself, and a clear, noble, ever-aspiring sense of duty that lifted her morally into quite another and unseen sphere of interior life.

Sir Hugh behaved very well for several days, and the only result of his conversation with Lady Redcliffe was to make him kinder and more paternal than ever in his manner to Teresa; while Cecil, seeing the way she was treated by his parents, began to take heart of grace, and to believe that his wishes were not at all unattainable. But by degrees a little perversity began to grow into the good baronet's humour. He thought that they were all too timid and discreet, and that a little more outspoken sentiment would prove a better and more healthy mode of proceeding.

"Good gracious me!" exclaimed the worthy man; "why, what are the girls made of in the present day, when you must not tell them that an honest man is in love

with them? You don't mean to tell me that pretty creature, who changes colour like the breast of a pigeon with every turn, has not got a *heart*, and does not know that *somebody* will want to marry her? Why, in my time the babies knew that in their nurseries. If it were not that, queen as she looks, she is as humble and gentle as a little mouse, I should be inclined to think she is laughing at us all. But no, that is not possible. However, I am determined I will not stand it much longer. I shall go over to her father, and have a talk with him about it."

It was the morning after Sir Hugh had come to this magnanimous resolve, and probably in consequence of the conviction that he was shortly about to have the solution of the whole matter in his own hands by an interview with Lord Clifford, that he ventured for the first time to try a little bantering upon Teresa, when she came gliding into the room so noiselessly and gracefully. She kissed Lady Redcliffe as

she passed to her seat, and took her place as if she were rather a daughter of the house than a mere guest, shook hands with Sir Hugh and the girls, and just threw a kind little nod of recognition across the table to the anxious and delighted Cecil. Sir Hugh had got through the more substantial part of his breakfast, and was just finishing it off with the lighter refreshment of an egg, when this little scene passed before him. He sat watching her, with an arch smile irradiating his full good-humoured face. He watched her quiet ease, and noticed Cecil's tremour, and saw Lady Redcliffe's half-anxious glance, and then began: "There you are again, Miss Teresa, fluttering down upon us like an eagle in a covey of partridges, and making us all quiver to the tips of our wings. I wonder if you mean always to be so quiet and calm, and to do such execution all the while." Teresa looked up in unfeigned surprise.

"My dear Sir Hugh, what do you mean?

Why do you call me an eagle? Is it because I am late for breakfast? Has anything happened?" she said, looking quickly round on the faces before her.

"Nothing has happened, my dear, more than happens every day, and all day. We are your very devoted servants, and you are a little queen, though you don't seem to know it. And there is one poor devil of a slave of yours, who, I think, will be coming to grief, if you don't put him out of his misery soon."

As soon as Sir Hugh had begun his sentence, Cecil, with the quick instinct that more was coming than he could bear, had risen from his seat opposite Teresa's, and moved to the door. As he did so, Teresa saw that he was deadly pale, and as her eye met his troubled glance, she turned crimson, and looked down. Sir Hugh rose as he finished his speech, and came round to where she was sitting. He bent a moment over her, and kissed her forehead, where the dark locks parted.

“ You must not mind what an old man says, my dear. Only we are all very fond of you, and that’s all about it.” And then with tears in his eyes, he turned round and followed his son out of the room.

Poor Teresa ! she felt a choking sensation in her throat, and her little hands turned very cold and trembled. She made a vast and half ineffectual effort to finish her breakfast, and to speak without her voice betraying the tears that she was keeping back. Lady Redcliffe came to her aid, with great presence of mind and motherly feeling, and in a few minutes Teresa seemed herself again, and spoke naturally and cheerfully ; but Lady Redcliffe’s quick eye detected that she was paler than usual. Breakfast was very soon over, for Teresa’s was spoiled by this little episode. The ladies stepped through the open window on to the terrace, and after giving as much time and attention as good breeding required to the remarks of her companions, and to the arrangements for spending the

day, Teresa slipped away to her own room, and shut herself in.

When the world came forth from the hands of its Creator there was no storm : the rain fell not, and the wind slept ; the lakes lay in liquid repose, and the trees and flowers painted their image without a break on the smooth waters that aptly mirrored the sky above so as to seem like a second heaven. The green sea lay for ever smiling beneath the moon and sun, like a dreaming child, and knew not its own depths. Inanimate nature was still, save for the invisible progress of growth. But at the word of God the wind awoke, and unfolding its rustling wings, swept through the forests, and dashed upon the level waters. The trees shivered with the consciousness of a new force, revealing to them their strength and their flexibility. The sea cleft its waves, and discovered the glittering treasures of its own bosom. The lakes played with the painted images on their surface and broke them into rippling lines of light.

The sleep of nature was over ; the stir of life had begun. Rashly and giddily, but wonderfully beautiful, the rush of action and motion evoked the hidden harmonies of creation, and brought forth fecundity and force.

The maiden's heart is like the world before the wind awoke. But the first breath of love breaks its silence, and multiplies its action—for good or for evil.

Teresa's first sensations on finding herself alone were those simply of bewilderment and anxious surprise, as if a gulf had suddenly yawned at her feet. That anybody should fall in love with her was not a probability that ever entered into her day dreams ; that it should have happened without her even suspecting it, struck her as strange, and not what she would in her utter inexperience have expected ; and that she should have been the cause of this startling event in a family where she had been treated with such kindness, such affection and confidence, filled her with shame

and regret, as though it had been her fault.

But Teresa had from childhood learnt to read her own conscience, and to render an account to herself of her motives, strictly and as before God, and quite free from any morbid self-introspection. She therefore soon grew calm upon this subject, and looking back upon all she had done was quite sure it was through no fault of hers if Cecil's peace had been disturbed by her presence. Having settled this question with herself, she began to scrutinize her own feelings towards him. Was she still quite heart-whole? Yes, quite! was the frank, unhesitating reply. She liked Cecil: she thought him a very good fellow; she admired his manly, honest character; she was grateful to him for caring for her. If ever she wished to marry, and her father liked Cecil, he might be her choice as soon, nay in the absence of any other experience, sooner than any one else. But, on the other hand, she had no thought of marry-

ing. Her heart was set solely and exclusively on bringing about greater happiness to her poor father in his own home. His welfare was her mission, and until that was accomplished she could think of no other. When her father no longer wanted her, perhaps she might marry. She did not know that she should; she thought perhaps she should not. Anyhow, her father's wishes would be a guide, and until then she might put aside the thought, and go back to her own home, and look after that solitary, melancholy man whose whole happiness seemed centred in her; and thus by degrees Teresa grew quite calm again. The startled feelings had already worn off; it ceased to feel extraordinary and wonderful that a man should care for her in that way, and the event took its place readily and easily in the well-assorted category of facts in her mind; which had each and all to be met with the quiet self-possession and simple sense of duty that formed her great characteristics.

She at once made up her mind that she would return to her father. It would be awkward to remain any longer at the Manor Grange. It would look, after the fatal discovery she had made, as if she were waiting for Cecil to speak to her; and she was somewhat anxiously turning in her thoughts how she should inform her father of her wish to go home, when a servant knocked at her door, to say a groom had ridden over from the castle with some letters for her. She found a letter from Rose, full of longing to return to England, and a few lines from her father, wanting to know when she would like to come back, and saying how he missed her. She immediately despatched the groom with a few lines in reply, stating she had been on the point of writing to tell him that she hoped he would send the carriage to fetch her the following morning; and assuring him that much as she had enjoyed her visit to the Redcliffes, she was looking forward to her happy evenings alone with him at the

castle. This done, she communicated her intentions to Julie, and then, with rather a beating heart, and a shade of silence and timidity in her manner, she went downstairs to join the others in the drawing-room. She at once told Lady Redcliffe she had heard from her father, and that as he was getting impatient for her return, the carriage would fetch her the next day.

Throughout the rest of the day an instinct of maidenly reserve kept Teresa very much by Lady Redcliffe's side. She was graver than usual, but if possible, more sweet and childlike than ever, and when it came to the leave-taking the next day, nothing could be more artless than the affectionate gratitude with which she bade farewell to her friends. Her manner was so kind that it might have meant everything, and yet it was so self-possessed and dignified, that it might mean just what she actually said, and no more.

Sir Hugh saw the mistake he had made ; but now that it was done both he and Lady

Redcliffe agreed no real harm could come of it, and there was time enough yet to play out the game and win it in favour of Cecil, which they confidently hoped to do.

Meanwhile, Cecil chewed the bitter-sweet cud of many fancies, and grew on that food into an older, a wiser, and a deeper man.

CHAPTER IV.

THE LAST BEAT OF A NOBLE HEART.

NEARLY three months elapsed from the date of Teresa's return to the castle before Lord Clifford and Rose reached England. The time passed in an even monotonous way, giving very little external evidence of the firm purpose that was carrying Teresa, day by day, through the difficulties of her position; but working, as good always works, silently and hiddenly. Robert had returned to England, and though his father had procured him some nominal occupation in London, he had plenty of leisure to come down to Raymond Castle when he pleased. He did so several

times, but never for long together. He found the old castle dull and dreary. He thought Teresa very beautiful, but she was too quiet to amuse him; while between father and son there always appeared to be a kind of restraint; a haughty reserve on the father's side and a sullen resentment on that of the son. Robert was undeniably handsome, and in colouring and features more like his uncle than his father. He had a clear grey eye, not large but deep set, which latter appearance was increased by the peculiarity of the upper lid being drawn down past the outer corner of the eye itself; a peculiarity which added darkness to his scowl, and seemed equally to continue a line of light from the glistening eye when he laughed. Though his eyes were grey, and his hair a golden brown, his eyebrows were strongly marked—a compact clear line of thick dark hair. His lips were rather full, too much so for intellectual beauty. And when angry, his eyes seemed to turn into two balls of yellow flame, while

in moments of repose the grey would deepen and soften into pale blue.

He had retained and developed the characteristics we have already noticed when he was a guest at his uncle's house. He was brilliant and sparkling in conversation, but not free from coarseness, and had certainly less depth of intellect than his father, and far fewer attainments.

Mr. Clifford seemed more indifferent to sport this autumn than usual, and more devoted to study. But Robert went out shooting daily, and always accompanied by Vincenzo. Nor was this the only amusement in which Vincenzo was called to aid and assist. If Robert was up late in the morning it might have been accounted for by his being frequently up late at night. He had converted the gun-room, close to the servants' offices and which had an entrance from the court-yard as well as a communication with the house, into a den for himself, and more went on in that unhallowed retreat than was known to Mr. Clifford.

Vincenzo was butler as well as valet, and had full power over the cellars, even had he not had other resources at his command. The grooms and general hangers-on of the castle were all partisans of Mr. Robert's; and thought a young gentleman who would laugh and even drink with them, a very preferable master to the proud severe man whose bread they ate, and whose wages they pocketed. The greater number of them were ready at any moment to do their young master's bidding, and therefore no great difficulty was experienced in admitting privately some of the less respectable young men of the neighbourhood, to spend a not very quiet or sober evening with Mr. Robert, far into the little hours of the morning.

Teresa had a vague instinct that matters were going on worse than her father thought; but whether Robert had succeeded in keeping things so close that the upper servants in the house, who might have betrayed him, really were not aware

to what a pass things had got, or whether they only kept it from Mr. Clifford and Teresa for fear of annoying them, it is certain that Teresa really knew nothing, and Mr. Clifford next to nothing, of what went on. What he did know, or what he suspected, he kept to himself. He was afraid of attempting to draw the reins in too tight. Robert was past the age to be guided by his father; and remonstrance was more likely to end in an open quarrel and a breach between father and son than in anything else. This Mr. Clifford was very anxious to avoid, and besides there was Vincenzo in the background, and the thought of that man always gave Roger a feeling of insecurity, even in connection with his own children.

It was on a damp drizzling day, far into the month of October, that Lord Clifford and Rose returned to Nutley Hall. Teresa had been consulting with her father whether they should be there to welcome them on their arrival, or should call on them some

hours after. Teresa had been in favour of being at the door to receive them; but Mr. Clifford seemed to shrink from this, as so many Englishmen would do from anything that looked like a demonstration. It ended in Teresa going there to meet her cousin, and Mr. Clifford promising to ride down to see his brother in the course of the evening.

Teresa drove down to the hall in the pony-carriage, and spent some hours in a melancholy way, walking round the rooms to see that everything looked home-like, and arranging some flowers in the vases as they used to be in her aunt's time. Over the mantelpiece in the drawing-room hung a beautiful picture of Lady Clifford by Sir Joshua Reynolds. Her dress was white, with that tawny-coloured scarf the great artist was so fond of painting, floating across it, and a red ribbon ran through the masses of her dark hair. Teresa could not look at the beauty of that face, so full of soul and intellect, revealing so wonderfully in its rich

colouring the impassioned depth of the Italian woman's character, without shedding tears; and she wondered how Lord Clifford would ever bear to leave it still hanging there. Upon speaking to the housekeeper on the subject, she found that the second smaller room had been prepared for Lord Clifford, and that the faithful old servant, who mourned her beautiful mistress as truly as if she had been a relation of the family, only waited Teresa's advice to lock the drawing-room door, but leave the key in. "Then you know, miss, his poor lordship can either go in or not as he likes, without having to ring to have the room opened."

At four o'clock the sound of wheels called Teresa to the front entrance. It was a sad and a silent meeting. Teresa waited in the porch; as she did so she heard a step behind her. It was Father Netherby, very pale, and looking more full of kindness than ever. She knew that it was not out of place that he should be there to welcome home the bereaved man and the motherless

girl. The servants had all gathered in a group at the end of the hall, dressed in deep mourning. Lord Clifford alighted first, but waited to assist Rose, who sprang forward into Teresa's arms. Lord Clifford advanced, so much thinner, so much older, than when he had gone away. His face ennobled by suffering, and the scantier locks round his brow giving a new and a grander character to his countenance. He held Teresa long in his arms, and called her his child. For a moment his step faltered, then laying his hand lightly, as if for support, on the priest's arm, he passed down the hall, bowing kindly but sadly to the dependants, and together with Father Netherby entered the library. Teresa drew Rose into the morning-room, after kissing Madame de Bray and her dear old nurse, who was shedding tears of mingled joy and sorrow. Lord Clifford remained a long time in the library with Father Netherby, and while there sent a message to his brother, to beg he would come to him at once. The priest was gone

when Mr. Clifford arrived: the brothers wished to be alone.

What changes had taken place in the characters of the two men since last they met! Roger, as our readers are aware, had never been fond of Angela. But since he had parted with her he had lived a whole life, and his soul was seared with memories full of remorse. But at the same time a gentle home influence was evoking, even from the very consequences of his crime, better feelings than he had ever known when, as the cold sarcastic man of the world and the sceptical philosopher, he had shrunk from the bright intelligence and spotless candour of his sister-in-law.

The jealousy of his character had diminished as his ambition had died out. He was no longer good and great in his own estimation; he was a miserable criminal, afraid of his own valet. The result was, he was more patient with Lord Clifford's pining grief than he could have found it possible to be in former days. And Lord Clifford, who

more than ever needed his brother's stronger nature to lean upon, found him all and more than all he expected. Roger soon perceived that his brother was powerless to act without him. Having for so long had the entire management of the Nutley estate under his control, Lord Clifford had to apply to him for information upon a variety of subjects; and from that he went on to asking his advice, and finally to getting him to act for him. He never openly spoke to Roger about the cloud that had fallen on the latter, but he did everything that his superior position could effect towards putting forward his brother and testifying to the confidence he had in him. Nor was this without effect; Lord Clifford was greatly beloved, and his popularity formed a panoply for his brother, while Roger's own cleverness and tact did the rest.

It soon became evident that Lord Clifford's health was not what it had been. He was easily wearied by any bodily exertion, and never having been a man of much read-

ing, he was apt to be bored when stopping at home. He grew very dependent upon the presence of Rose, his brother, and Teresa, but his old anxieties about Robert seemed to have died out. His nephew was very little associated in his mind with recollections of Angela, and now everything was measured by that standard. The consequence was that Robert was less pressed by his father than usual to remain at the castle, the nominal occupation in London acquired importance in proportion, and the young scapegrace found it convenient to spend the greater part of his time away from home.

The confidence between Lord Clifford and Roger seemed to embrace all subjects save two. Lord Clifford never asked Roger how it had happened that the neighbours avoided him. And Roger never spoke to Lord Clifford of the anxiety caused him by his son. Upon all other family matters they talked without reserve. Even Teresa's visit to the Manor Grange, and his hopes about Cecil Redcliffe, and his talk with Sir Hugh

(for the baronet had really carried out his threat, and was greatly pleased with himself when he had done so, as it convinced him that Mr. Clifford wished for the marriage, but was in no hurry to part with Teresa, and seemed to think it would not do to press her for an answer at present), all were discussed.

When Roger questioned Lord Clifford as to whether he had thought of an alliance for Rose, the answer was evasive. He thought Rose too young for the question to be mooted yet—forgetting that his own wife was barely sixteen when he married her. As he kept nothing secret from Roger, he was as open upon his political opinions as on all else; and strange to say, Roger fell back upon the family politics as quietly as if his former ambition had never made him impatient of the yoke they, together with the old faith, imposed upon him.

And so the autumn glided by, and the crisp frost came down one night upon the garden flowers, and turned them suddenly

into black decay. The winter set in early and severe. The master of the hounds seldom appeared at the head of his pack. When he did, Roger was with him; when he did not, Roger often took his place; and so the two brothers welded together, utterly dissimilar in character, and yet becoming more and more necessary to each other; and Roger unconsciously growing a better man beneath the influence of the weaker mind, but the purer heart of his elder brother.

Rose and Teresa were very constant companions, and mutually supported and consoled each other in their sad bereavement. For some time after they returned home they received no guests at Nutley Hall; but by degrees Lord Clifford asked first one and then another of his old friends to dine with him. And when he did so, Teresa at least was always present, and sometimes her father. On one occasion he invited Sir Hugh and Cecil Redcliffe, and without telling Teresa whom she was to meet he had

begged her father to bring her. He seemed to have done this that he might judge for himself how the question stood between the young people. But if it were not difficult for him to pronounce on Cecil's feelings, his calm, dignified little niece betrayed no more than her usual vivacity and her universally pleasing manners. He spoke to Roger about it afterwards, but got no further answer than that it would not do to hurry Teresa. She was not like other girls, and, besides, he was in no haste to lose her ; indeed it would be quite impossible for him to part with her : his home was sad enough at any time, he said, with an unwonted expression of feeling ; but it would be intolerable without Teresa.

The winter passed on with few events to mark its course. The various members of the family—at least the older and more observant ones—were a little anxious about Lord Clifford. He seemed to have suddenly subsided into an old man, and there was an inertness about his movements that brought

to Madame de Bray's recollection the many times the late Lady Clifford had alluded to the Cliffords being a short-lived family, and to the vague and apparently unreasonable apprehension she always had that her husband would die in the prime of life, like so many of his ancestors. Madame de Bray spoke to Mr. Clifford about it. He seemed struck by her words, but made very little remark beyond expressing his opinion that as his brother appeared to have lost his taste for hunting, the winter weather was tedious to him, and that he would improve in the spring. But the spring came, and brought no change. Roger spoke to his brother about his health, and advised his seeing a medical man. Lord Clifford laughed, and said he had never had a doctor in his life, and had too little faith in them to begin now. He assured Roger he was quite well.

“Only a little down-hearted, you know, my dear fellow; and there is no cure for that. It is very kind of you to give up as

much of your time as you do to a stupid man like me. I never was a great scholar as you are, Roger, and, perhaps, from coming into the property so early in life, and being left an orphan when I was only fifteen, I had not so many advantages in that way. You ought to have been the elder son, Roger; you have more ambition than I, and would have made a better head of the family. It is a fine thing to have ambition, Roger; only you see, situated as we are, there is very little field for a Catholic nobleman in this country. You would have made the most of whatever there is, if you had been in my place; and, perhaps, you would have done more in the royal cause as well, than with the best will I have: not but what that is a lost cause, anyhow. I have lived long enough to know that. It might yet have been saved, Roger, if we had had noble-hearted men like you in a position like mine. I have been the wrong man in the wrong place, and you would have been just the reverse."

And so the generous man talked on, full of the three great faiths of all manly, brave, and generous hearts : faith in their God ; faith in their princes ; and faith in their own kith and kin. The blood runs thin in degenerate veins that does not make the heart beat hotter for those of its own race. He is worse than an infidel who does not care for his own.

About the first week in May, the Catholic Vicar Apostolic had occasion to visit that part of his extensive diocese, and Lord Clifford being the leading Catholic of the place, it was of course to his house that Dr. Challoner was invited.

Secretly as even in those days all ecclesiastical matters had to be conducted (for as late as 1804 there were not unfrequent instances of Catholics being fined for not attending the Protestant services, the penal laws being still in force, though not fully carried out), still the presence of the Vicar Apostolic was an occasion which brought all the Catholics together from far and near ;

and for a week Nutley Hall was filled up with a succession of very quiet guests, who came rather to do honour to the Vicar Apostolic than for amusement.

Teresa spent the whole of the time at the hall, and it was partly in consequence of some remarks made to the vicar by Father Netherby, and partly from his own observation of her sweet expression and winning manner, that the vicar took especial notice of our young heroine. Teresa, with her usual practical good sense, made the most of this opportunity. Where her own higher interests, or those of others, were concerned, she was too simple and too much in earnest to be checked by ill-timed shyness, and, therefore, finding the good old man kindly disposed towards her, she opened her whole heart to him, and in more than one long private conversation, talked to him of herself, of her father, and of all her home difficulties and trials. He not only gave her great encouragement and much valuable advice, but he bade her remember that any

moment she was at liberty to avail herself of his services if she wished to apply to him; and he even begged her to let him hear from time to time of how matters were going on with respect to herself and her father.

Mr. Clifford had been more than once to Nutley Hall during Dr. Challoner's visit, and had shown that perfect high breeding, and that polished manner of a man of the world who had lived much in foreign courts, though excluded from that of his own country, which never failed to make him agreeable to strangers.

Before leaving Nutley Hall, the Vicar Apostolic had spoken very particularly to Father Netherby respecting Teresa, commending her in a special manner to his care as a daughter of his own, in whose welfare he took a deep interest. He did this more as an expression of his own marked regard for Teresa, than because it was needed, Father Netherby having an affection and an esteem for Teresa that

required no recommendation from another to increase it.

It was not known till long afterwards, when the Vicar Apostolic mentioned the fact, that during his stay at Nutley Hall, Lord Clifford had spoken much of himself, and had strongly expressed to him, the Vicar Apostolic, a notion that he should not be long in this world, and altogether had spoken as a man would do who was daily accustoming himself to the approach of death, and preparing for the event.

The pleasure grounds and shrubberies connected with Nutley Hall were of very great extent, and at their limits touched upon thick woods stretching far away, and on one side little broken by cultivation for more than a mile. This quiet part had been always a favourite resort of the two girls, and they were in the habit of leaving home early with their books and their work, and, some slight refreshment in a basket, and, sometimes accompanied by Madame de Bray and sometimes alone, spending the

whole day in the woods from breakfast to dinner. Rose's constant invitations to Teresa, to come to Nutley Hall for a few nights, were generally sent upon the plea that she "wanted to have another good spell at our forest life," which was the term they gave it. They were not content to remain within the bounds of the pleasure grounds. Rose always persisted that she wanted to get beyond cultivation and conventionalities, and be out in the trackless woods free as a bird. Teresa would remark that they enjoyed this with mitigations, seeing that a servant in livery carried a variety of rugs and an excellent cold luncheon to refresh them in their savage state; but with this difference, and perhaps in consequence of it, they managed to spend some very happy days with a great deal of innocent and natural pleasure.

The trio were seated together beneath the flickershade of some white-stemmed beech trees, and talking over some French poetry to which Teresa had just been doing

full justice with her perfect French and the delicate inflexions of her beautiful voice, when Madame de Bray's attention was arrested by seeing two eyes eagerly watching them from a thicket not far off. She got up and approached towards the spot, and as she did so, perceived a shabby-looking man not dressed in an ordinary English peasant's dress but with something foreign in his appearance, lurking behind the underwood. She called out in English to inquire what he wanted, but without making any reply he started from his lair, and hurried away into the forest behind them.

"What is it, madame?" exclaimed both the girls in a breath.

"Some poor man hiding there," she replied. "I dare say it is only one of the charcoal burners. There are many of them in this forest. They lead a wild sort of nomad life, and see so little of any but themselves, that they are almost as timid as the wild animals."

"But he was so oddly dressed," said Rose, "and he did not look English."

"I did not remark that," said Madame de Bray. "He certainly had a beard, but I do not suppose the charcoal burners have many opportunities for shaving."

"I remember one day," said Teresa, "when I was riding with my father, coming upon one of their encampments in the forest of C——, the other side of the hill. They looked so picturesque, but rather wild, and something like banditti. There was a huge pile of wood in small pieces slowly smouldering near, and my father showed me other parts of the forest where the ground is all charred and blackened in the circular space where they had erected one of their burning piles."

"Now, Teresa," said Rose, laughing, "that is just what would suit me. Do let us turn charcoal burners, and live in the forest. We will hang our kettle on three sticks, and I will blow the fire when we want to have some tea; and

Madame de Bray must wear a red cloak, because it looks so pretty among the green boughs."

"Meanwhile," said Teresa, "here is James come to announce the ringing of the dressing-bell, and as I don't think you are at all likely to live only on tea, my little Rosy, we must for the present put off becoming charcoal burners."

The whole party returned to the house; the apparition of the strange man in the thicket was thought to be thoroughly accounted for, and nothing more was said about it.

A day or two passed without the girls renewing their bivouac in the forest. But at last the white glimmer in the morning air prognosticating a hot day, Rose proposed that they should go back to their woodland haunts. Teresa was willing; Madame de Bray had a headache, and was to be excused. The little furniture of their forest boudoir was soon arranged as usual by James, and the two girls, half sitting, half

reclining, were silently reading or meditating, through the long, hot hours, sometimes talking to each other of what they were reading, sometimes strolling a little further into the woods, and plucking a few wild strawberries, or gathering specimens of ferns.

The sun was beginning to decline, and the shadows were becoming narrow and gigantic, when Rose was startled by finding a dark shade pass over the page of her book, thrown by some object suddenly standing between her and the red setting sun. She looked quickly round, and there stood the supposed charcoal burner of their previous visit to the forest. Rose uttered an exclamation, and Teresa, rising from her seat at a little distance, approached and asked the man what he wanted. To their surprise he merely shook his head as if he did not understand the question, and then in very good French begged to know which was Miss Clifford.

“We are both Miss Clifford,” said Teresa.
“What do you want with us?”

“Which,” replied the man, “is the daughter of the man who lives in the castle?”

“I am,” said Teresa. “What is your business?”

“If you are his child, it is to the other young lady I wish to speak,” said the man; “I want to see your father, the English lord.”

“Why do not you go to the house then?” said Rose, colouring with natural alarm at the wild, strange-looking man.

“Because,” replied the Frenchman, “the servants would drive me from the door. I have lain in wait for you here more than a week. I should have spoken to you the last evening you sat here had you not had that lady with you. I will see Lord Clifford, and if I cannot see him I will see your father,” added he, turning fiercely to Teresa, “and then it will be the worse for you all.”

“You had better come to the house with us, and if you really have any business with Lord Clifford, no doubt you can have an interview with him,” said Teresa.

“ But I will only go if you promise me I shall be admitted. I am not going to submit to being turned from the house like a dog, or sent to prison. I am afraid to go to the castle,” said the man, in an odd, dreamy way, half to himself, “ or I would do the whole thing at once, and tell Mr. Clifford.”

The conversation had been carried on in French. Teresa, turning to Rose, said in English, with a smile :

“ We had better make him walk back with us, for fear he should have a design upon the silver spoons we used at luncheon.”

Rose did not seem to like the companionship, but there was no help for it; and as they advanced to the house she decided upon tapping at the window of her father's study, that opened into the garden, and so, if he were in the room, explaining at once their strange adventure, and leaving him to act as he thought best.

They walked quickly on in silence, the man following in a sauntering, half-determined way behind.

“ I do not think he is quite right in his head,” said Teresa. “ There does not seem to be any harm in him, and he looks half silly.”

“ He frightens me dreadfully,” said Rose in a half-hysterical voice, and seeing her father’s study window open, she darted away like a bird, and flew into the room. By the time Rose had partially explained to Lord Clifford what had happened Teresa appeared at the open window, having desired the man to wait a few paces off. Her account was calmer and more comprehensible than Rose’s, and when she added :

“ He says, if he does not see you he will see my father, and then it will be the worse for us all !” a slight shade passed over Lord Clifford’s face at these words.

“ I will see him, my dear child,” said her uncle ; “ I dare say he is only a poor tramp, intending to beg for money, and thinking to enforce his claims by a threat. As the man is already here you need not say anything about it to the servants, and

now run away, both of you, while I call him in."

The girls obeyed, and as soon as the door closed on them a strange instinct made him turn the key to prevent his interview with the beggar being interrupted, and then approaching the window he beckoned to the man to advance.

An hour after, the servant came to the door to announce dinner; it was still locked. Lord Clifford opened it, and the servant perceived that his master was deadly pale. He was not dressed for dinner. In the grate lay the black thin ashes of some paper that had been burnt. The servant's attention was called to it, because in burning the paper the fuel in the grate had accidentally caught fire, and some had been raked out to extinguish it, so that the grate was untidy, and the servant had to re-arrange it. He said nothing of this at the time, attaching no importance to it, but he remembered it afterwards.

Lord Clifford came late to dinner, and as

he entered the room where the three ladies were waiting for him, he desired the groom of the chambers to send a servant with the gig to the chapel-house to beg Father Netherby would return in the gig, as he wanted to see him, and hoped he would stop the night.

Lord Clifford was very silent at dinner. When he joined the ladies in the drawing-room, and, noticed that Madame de Bray was not there, he told the two girls that the beggar was a poor Frenchman, who had been servant to a gentleman who knew something of the Clifford family, and that being now out of a place, and wanting to return to his own country, he had come to beg.

“ I gave him enough to take him back. I do not think he is quite right in his mind ; he seems half-witted. No one saw him about the place save us three, and I do not wish his visit talked of.”

Father Netherby arrived shortly after, and he and Lord Clifford retired to the

study together. Rose and Teresa remembered in after days how affectionately he had taken leave of them that night, but particularly Teresa; as he kissed her, he said :

“ Why did not your father come to dinner to-night, Teresa ? You must tell him to-morrow that I miss him. Poor Roger ! he must be dull up there in the castle by himself.”

Father Netherby and Lord Clifford sat up very late together that night. The next morning the priest said mass in the chapel at Nutley Hall, and then returned to his own house.

Whatever the conversation was that kept the reverend father and Lord Clifford so deeply engaged far into the night, it did not comprise the full particulars of the latter's interview with his mysterious visitor.

It sometimes happens that a man may go on for years steadily refusing to believe the evidence of a fact which would distress him if he once opened his mind to conviction,

and he is able to do so with perfect success, really believing what he means to believe, and utterly ignoring what he does not choose to know. Nevertheless, he carries about with him an innate instinct, which lies quite dormant in his soul till a trifle, perhaps light as air, wakes up his latent perceptions, and suddenly, before he is aware of any mental process by which he has arrived at conviction, the truth stands full before him. After that, self-deception is no longer possible—at least not possible to the extent it once was.

Lord Clifford had never believed anything against Roger. If he were told Roger gambled, he took it as an idle report. When it was proved to him that he retained a worthless swindler like Vincenzo in his service, he blamed the servant, but not the master; in short, any accusations brought against his younger brother glided out of his mind like drops of rain on the white plumage of the swan. Nevertheless, when Teresa uttered those few words about the

strange man, "He says, if he does not see you he will see my father, and then it will be the worse for us all," instantly the conviction started up, whole and entire, that something in the reports about Roger was true. Hence his quick instinct of locking the door, and preparing to battle it out with the man alone. It was well that he did so, his presence of mind enabled him, under the favourable circumstances that so strangely surrounded what might otherwise have proved a very embarrassing, if not fatal discovery, to continue and profit by that wonderful patience of Providence that left the guilty man so long in security.

Our readers will remember the letter so cautiously committed to the postboy's bag by Henry Bethune, on that fatal night of the murder; that letter was addressed to the Count de G——, in Paris. The count was a dissolute companion of Henry Bethune's, younger than himself, and, if possible, more reckless. The very night that letter reached Paris and lay in the general post-

office, waiting to be sorted, till the morning broke, the count had had a quarrel with another man upon a miserable question of jealousy respecting an opera dancer. He and his adversary met the following morning by daybreak, in the Bois de Boulogne, and the unfortunate young count was brought home to his apartment bleeding to death, with a ball through his left lung. The count was not in the habit of having his letters brought to the house, for reasons best known to himself, but always gave his address at one of the cafés in the Boulevard des Italiens. He had attached to his service, for at least some hours of the day, a young man who was half-groom, half-lacquey, and whose business it was to call daily at the café for the count's letters on his way from his own lodging to the count's apartment. The morning of the duel he had done so as usual, and the only letter he had found was the one from Henry Bethune. He put it into his pocket, and continued his course to the house where the count

lodged. On arriving there he found everything in the greatest confusion, as the wretched man had expired a few moments before, and everybody was in consternation and horror—the police agents in the house, the doctor and a few friends still standing round the corpse. The end of it was that the man forgot all about the letter in his pocket now that he was no longer responsible to the person to whom it was addressed. In assisting to move the body, the coat, in the pocket of which it was placed, had become stained with the unfortunate man's blood, and when the servant, whose name was Louis, returned home he put away the coat till he could have it cleaned, and with it the letter, the very existence of which had escaped his memory. From one accident or another it was many months before Louis came across the coat and the letter again. When he did so he had completely lost sight of everybody in any way connected with the count, and having no one to give the letter to he had

amused himself with breaking the seal, and reading it. Louis was not by any means a sharp man; he was one of those rather better than half-witted beings who are very slow in getting hold of an idea, extraordinarily tenacious of it when they have once done so, and very persevering in carrying out the end they propose to themselves. But, like children and monkeys, the end is seldom proportioned to the degree of pertinacity with which they have followed it, and consequently they may often be cleverly induced to abandon their fixed notions for a quite inadequate result.

It took a very long time for Louis to arrive at any conclusion respecting the singular letter of which he found himself the possessor. When he had formed to himself a distinct theory on the matter, it worked on his weak brain till it became the ruling idea of his life. He was acquainted with Henry Bethune much in the same way as he had been with the count, and he had frequently seen Roger Clifford with Bethuné

in Paris. He found that the letter indicated some possible danger to Bethune at the hands of Roger, in consequence of the former, as he stated in his letter, having won large sums from the latter. Bethune's never re-appearing in Paris, his friends being entirely at a loss to guess what had become of him, was all known to Louis through the servants of Bethune's former associates. As it happened, he had not found the letter in his forgotten coat-pocket till the nine days' wonder of the gambler's non-appearance had died out in Paris; for a man like Henry Bethune was not likely to have many real friends, though he had scores of bad companions and associates. When, therefore, at last Louis came upon the old letter he did not think he could make any profitable use of it so long after date, amongst the people who had known Bethune, and whom also he had, since the count's death, himself lost sight of; but pondering over it in his half-witted way, it had dawned upon him that he might use it

as a means of extorting money from the rich English milord at whose house it was written, and whose character was involved in its contents.

He had bided his time, as our readers perceive, with the dull patience of his class, but he had never lost sight of the mercenary object he had in view. By degrees he had worked his way down to the coast, and crossed the channel in a trading vessel. He had gradually begged his way to the neighbourhood of the Cliffords, and there he had waited and watched, lurking about in all sorts of secret ways, and maturing his plans. He was not so utterly ignorant of the English language as he had pretended to be to Rose and Teresa, because formerly he had been intimate with an English servant of Bethune's, and had picked up a good many words. By this means he had obtained a clearer notion of the Clifford family than he possessed when he first set out on his strange mission. In the first place he had ascertained that Roger Clif-

ford had an elder, and what was more to the purpose, a richer brother. Partly for this reason, and partly because his cunning was greater than his courage, he had relinquished his original intention of going straight to Roger, and thought that he was likely to succeed better in his only real object, that of securing a good sum of money, by going to Lord Clifford than by trying to get at Roger, of whom, on the whole, he felt the more afraid.

Fortunately, Lord Clifford perceived at once the sort of man he had to deal with, half-knave, half-fool, and he framed his course accordingly. He began by refusing to listen to one word the man had to say, or to attach any importance to his statements, until he had the letter to read in his own hands. Once he had it, he never intended to return it. There should be a struggle for life or death first. When he had *got it, and read it*, and had grasped in his mind, perfectly and at once, the immense importance of the imputations it

contained, he turned round upon the craven fool before him, and without giving him a moment to reply, he set before him, in the clearest and most telling manner, the inconceivable danger which he ran by the course he had adopted. He represented to him first, that he had violated the secrecy of a letter not addressed to himself; secondly, that though, of course, its contents were really perfectly innocuous, he had kept back this letter believing it to be of importance, and had ended by using it as a means of extorting money. He dwelt largely on his more than dubious position in England as a vagabond and a beggar, and assured him that the mere fact of the way in which he had stopped the Miss Cliffords in the forest made him obnoxious to the English laws. When he had thoroughly cowed the man, he showed him that he was entirely at his mercy, and that nothing but compassion for him as a miserable foreigner, unacquainted with the language, prevented him from giving him up

to the laws of the country, to whose gaols he, Lord Clifford, might at any moment send him. As the poor caitiff cringed before him he so far changed his tone as to say he would not prosecute him upon the condition that, receiving sufficient money to carry him back to France, he promised forthwith to quit the country, of course leaving the letter behind. This merciful reprieve was backed by the assurance that Lord Clifford would not send the constables after him, but would so far have him watched as to know to a dead certainty every step the wretched man took, until he had wisely and safely put the sea between himself and the English nobleman he had dared to intrude upon. The result was perfectly satisfactory. The timid foreigner was appalled by the prompt and dignified display of serious indignation manifested by Lord Clifford, and was only too grateful to be allowed to get safely away, not, however, without having received a sum of money, not large enough

to look like hush money, nor enough to realize his imaginings about making his fortune through this letter, but more than enough to take him back to France.

Lord Clifford gave no more than the barest outline of the event to Father Netherby, merely saying there had called a foreign beggar whom, in consequence of his having stopped his daughter and niece in the forest, he had threatened with being taken up. That he, Lord Clifford, wanted to be sure the fellow was gone, but did not wish to put any of his servants to watch him, and so begged Father Netherby to get that service done him by some of his people. The rest of his long interview with Father Netherby was on other matters.

This was the letter Lord Clifford read with a beating heart, and the black ashes of which the servant remarked in the grate some hours after.

“MY DEAR COUNT,

“You have lost your wager. You bet me ten to one that our friend Clifford’s good luck would follow him from Paris to his gloomy, damp, old castle, and that I should never regain the thousands I lost to him in the spring.

“I came here on Tuesday last. I leave before daybreak to-morrow, and shall have the pleasure of adding your little bet to the thousands I have filched the old boy of here. I have got promissory notes in his hand safely packed in that little gold-clasped pocket-book you so well know—that doubles, ay, trebles, what I lost. I am half tempted to a faint feeling of remorse, therefore, can’t be out of this lumbering old rat-hole too soon.

“I ought, wind and weather permitting, to be in Paris by latest on Wednesday. *Look out for me*—Clifford looks, to me, more than half-beside himself. *I do not drink his coffee to-night!* I saw him pour it out!! In

a few more hours I shall be out of this place. If I do not reach Paris in safety, have me cried by the town crier.

“*Seriously*, I shall be glad when the sea rolls between me and my *old, ruined* friend! So much for friendship! *Au revoir*.

“Yours,

“H. BETHUNE.”

The morning after this event the girls were made rather uneasy by noticing something peculiar in Lord Clifford's appearance. He looked unusually ill; there was a dark blue mark round his eyes, his face was very pale, and there was an involuntary and constant twitch in his mouth. He frequently raised his hand to his head, and though not irritable—that he never was now—there was something quick and vibrating in his tone of voice.

Lord Clifford spent the long morning, and late on into the afternoon alone in his study and waiting for Mr. Bell, the family

lawyer, whom he had sent the carriage to fetch from Blackdean.

He had gone through an amount of mental suffering since the beggar had stood in that room the evening before, which no words could picture. In his first agony a full conviction of Roger's guilt had forced itself upon him. He could not see his way out of the difficulty. Of course the letter did not prove that Roger had murdered Bethune, but it proved what Lord Clifford had never before believed—that Roger's mode of life laid him open to grave imputations, and that he had gambled so deeply and lost so much as to make it his interest to get Henry Bethune made away with.

It was agony; such agony as only a very generous and trusting nature could know—and, alas! a nature like that could perhaps never know it but once; for such great faith when broken is destroyed for ever, and no more such trust can live again.

He hid his face in his hands and wept as children weep, when, in their inexperience of sorrow, an unlimited grief seems to break in upon their summer-day of life. He went back in memory and without intending to do so, to their earliest boyhood; and while Roger stood before his thoughts then, covered with the suspicions created by that letter, in imagination Lord Clifford was seeing the "little Roger" of former times: taught by his elder brother to ride his first pony; screened by his elder brother from the penalties due to his childish tricks, sleeping in the same room with him, reading in the same book with him; the inseparable companion in all sports, and in the elder brother's eyes so much the superior. By degrees the images of the beloved past crowded so thick upon him that, also without his intending it, they had overshadowed the present and made it seem faint and unreal. The old love was too strong to be blotted out or even long obscured, and the subtle reasoning

of affection began its eloquent appeals against the evidence before him.

He was obliged to admit that Roger was a gambler ; so, he argued, were many others, as excellent men in other respects as Roger. It was to be regretted, but it was not, after all, so much to be wondered at : Roger's great talents had needed a wider range of action than what circumstances put within his reach, and thus crushed and cramped, his energies had found vent in what was less commendable. He had evidently lost heavily—how much Lord Clifford could not guess. “ Poor fellow ! he was the more to be pitied. If I had only known it sooner, and come to the rescue ! ” exclaimed the noble-hearted man, as he pondered over the broken pieces of his poor idol. But then came the horror of associating Roger with the crime of murder merely because a cold-blooded villain had won his money, and so chose to insinuate his life was in jeopardy ! It was infamous, cruel, shameful in the ex-

treme. And upon this thought, as upon a war-horse, generosity and affection mounted in hot haste, and trampling down all other considerations, rode triumphant off the field.

His cheek glowed as he thought with rage upon the miserable gossiping injustice of the neighbours, who had been whispering away Roger's reputation. He would have done battle with each one of them, could he have challenged them all singly. That being impossible, he internally bound himself to take his brother's part in every possible way, and to make his confidence in him known and appreciated.

Then came all the reflection upon ways and means ; and, finally, besides continually making his brother his constant adviser in all questions concerning the estate, he resolved upon leaving him a sum of twenty thousand pounds, which was to go to his daughter Teresa on his death, and a further sum of ten thousand pounds to Teresa, immediately on his own death. And lastly, as the greatest proof of con-

fidence, esteem, and affection possible, he decided on Roger's being sole guardian of Rose, in case of his dying before Rose married ; while the whole of the immense property was to revert to Roger and his heirs in the event of Rose dying without children.

Robert was not mentioned. Whether, in the excitement of generosity, he contemplated the probability of Rose marrying Robert (a dispensation being obtained, the possibilities of which we have already seen discussed), did not appear. The probability is, that it was in his mind, but the law of the Church with regard to the marriage of cousins being what it is, of course he could not go the length of alluding to it in a testamentary document.

Everything was done promptly and decidedly. Mr. Bell had not been consulted ; he had only received instructions with respect to the drawing up of those important codicils ; and nothing would satisfy Lord Clifford but to have it all settled at

once, and the necessary signatures affixed ; and it was done.

An immense weight seemed removed from Lord Clifford's mind after all was concluded ; but at the same time he appeared physically weary, and spent the remainder of the day with the two girls, making kind little playful remarks they remembered long after ; but also sitting silent for long together, his eyes fixed on Rose or Teresa ; and three times he asked the latter if she were quite sure her father was coming to dine and sleep. In spite of her answers in the affirmative, he ended in despatching a messenger to inquire, and was only satisfied when the reply came that Mr. Clifford would be there at half-past six, without fail.

After dinner the two brothers sat the evening together. There was something remarkably gentle and affectionate in Lord Clifford's manner, but also a feebleness in his way of moving that particularly struck Roger.

Lord Clifford had a habit at times of pacing the room slowly, and occasionally stopping to resume the conversation, and then pacing again. He had been walking up and down some time in silence when he abruptly stopped, and said,

“Roger, you never play now, do you?”

“No, George ; why do you ask?”

“I thought you did not, but I wanted to be sure. Are you in any money embarrassment now, Roger?”

“No. I was ; but it has come round.”

“I am glad to hear it. If you were, you would, I am sure, let me know ; I count on your doing that, and not keeping it secret from me under any circumstances. I wish you had always done so, my dear fellow. But perhaps it was my fault for not inquiring.”

“Not at all, George, not at all ;” stammered Roger, with emotion.

“It is a great comfort to me seeing you settled at the castle,” continued Lord Clifford ; “if anything were to happen to me,

Roger, I should leave everything in trust to you—*everything!*” he added with emphasis, but could not bring himself to name Rose. “I used at one time to be afraid that our opinions were not quite the same on all subjects. Perhaps it was your living so much abroad that made me lose sight of you a little; but now I see I was mistaken, and I am very glad of it. I trust everything to you, which is a great comfort to me.”

Roger saw his brother was speaking under a very strong impression, and had too much tact to interrupt him with any common-place reply. He listened in grave silence, and as Lord Clifford finished he paused opposite the chair on which Roger sat, and for a moment took his hand in both his and pressed it.

It was going a great way in demonstrative affection between two calm Englishmen, and Roger was much moved, and actually, for one moment, he bent his head, and his lips touched his brother's hand;

and then both men recovered themselves. But Roger was very pale, and Lord Clifford flushed like a man in weak health who had over-exerted himself.

They both retired to rest about eleven o'clock. Lord Clifford's bedroom was on the ground-floor, and opened into his study. He dismissed his valet in a short time, and taking a book, sat down in the arm-chair, desiring the man, however, not to go to bed, as he should ring in about half an hour for a glass of wine. The man waited above the half-hour, and began to wonder whether or no his master had fallen asleep. This he ended in doing himself. When he awoke it was half-past twelve, and he thought he had better go and see whether Lord Clifford wanted him again. He knocked at the study-door, and received no answer. At last he entered the room. Lord Clifford was sitting in the arm-chair, with his head hanging over the left arm of the chair in what appeared a most uncomfortable position. The servant thought

it better to rouse him, and for that purpose called him, then touched the hand falling over the arm of the chair, and which was icy cold. Getting alarmed, he raised the head of the apparently sleeping man, and was struck with horror at finding that Lord Clifford was not asleep, but had had a stroke; he uttered a faint moan as the servant lifted his head, but remained unconscious. Open on the floor lay the prayer-book that had fallen from his hand.

The servant hastened to Mr. Clifford's room, and called the housekeeper and Madame de Bray. Roger had, with the aid of the butler, carried the senseless form to the bed in the adjoining room, and instantly dismissed two messengers for the medical man and the priest.

Madame de Bray would not allow Rose to be disturbed when she was herself called to the sick man's room. He remained perfectly unconscious; and until she could judge how the case was likely to end, she shrank from rousing the poor girl, to stand

and watch the harrowing sight of her father lying speechless and senseless.

Towards daybreak, there came a change. The sick man opened his eyes, and seeing Roger and Father Netherby standing by him, faintly smiled. He gave his hand to Roger, and feebly pressed that of his brother, and then by signs, made him understand that he wished to be alone with Father Netherby. Signs alone could pass between the dying man and the priest. He could not articulate; but he heard and understood all. Then the weeping girls and the household gathered around the bed, and the last solemn rites of the dying were performed.

The end, however, had not come yet. For twenty-four hours more, silent but conscious, he lay in the presence of those who loved him. The blue eyes looked wistfully round on the dear faces that bent over him, and the one hand that he could still use feebly, grasped the hand of Roger or of Rose. But of Roger above all, and that

with so plaintively affectionate an expression in his face, that it was as if while life lasted he would go on making acts of faith in his brother, and protesting by the tenacity of his affection against all harsh judgments, or all unkind suspicions. Surely, love such as this is an all-prevailing prayer. Surely, when God implants such faithfulness in the weak heart of man, it is that the Divine heart out of the riches of His mercy is yearning to supply for the helplessness of human love, and *do* what we can only *wish* to do for the welfare of the beloved object!

Gently, but peacefully, with still speaking eyes, but silent lips, the noble, child-like man passed down "into the valley of the shadow of death," with unfaltering steps, and died as he had lived, full of faith and hope.

CHAPTER V.

DULL LIFE.

It was a long time before Rose sufficiently recovered her spirits to feel settled and at rest in her new home, with her uncle and guardian. But the great affection that existed between the two cousins softened, in a manner, to Rose the sorrow of exchanging Nutley Hall for Raymond Castle; Madame de Bray and the faithful Dorothy of course followed Rose. But soon after the latter retired as housekeeper to the priest at the Chapel House, and made way for a younger and more active lady's-maid. Madame de Bray did not formally resign her position, because Roger, the pre-

sent Lord Clifford, would not hear of her doing so. But she was absent in France sometimes for six months together, and in short what she received from Lord Clifford might rather be considered as a pension for past services than as a salary. At the same time Raymond Castle was always open to her, and a warm welcome given whenever she chose to pay the family a visit.

As Rose received though still under age, a considerable allowance, she was able to occupy herself in many works of charity among the neighbouring poor; but at first all her energies seemed to have gone to sleep, and had it not been for the wise tenderness of her cousin Teresa, she probably would never have entirely shaken off the lethargy that crept over her. Like most persons of naturally high spirits, when once prostrated by grief, she could not easily rise again. Her nature was less deep than that of Teresa, and consequently had less spring in it. It is the deep lakes that feed the large rivers: the lesser waters dry

up in the summer heat, and fail in their supply to the little streams.

At first, Teresa left her to indulge in the idleness of sorrow, and only tried to guide her thoughts to the consolations of faith. But when by degrees her bright mind discovered that Rose's weaker nature was finding a sentimental pleasure in inaction, she began to try and rouse her, and divert her thoughts from herself. Many schemes were set on foot for the good of those around them. Teresa found motives for visiting first one cottage and then another of the villages within their reach, and as both were good horsewomen some usefulness was combined with much invigorating exercise. Rose frequently seemed to feel the solitariness of their life in consequence of Lord Clifford visiting so little amongst the families of the neighbourhood. But being in such deep mourning, she attributed it to this fact; while Teresa was dreading the moment when the real reason, namely, her father's continued unpopularity, should dawn upon her.

It was beautiful to watch how Teresa, under all change of circumstances, held on the even tenor of her way. Her virtue was all the more perfect because it seemed so purely natural. There was no strain, no evident effort. She said little about her motives, less still about her feelings; but day after day came and went, without any one being painfully reminded by manifestations in her manner or temper that Teresa, too, had her trials, and that the little incidents of daily life which fret most people, somehow seemed to take little or no effect on her. When she spoke of sacred things, she did it in the same natural manner in which she spoke of other matters, only perhaps there was a slightly deeper tone in the inflexions of her sweet voice. Her religion was not a holiday dress to be put on and off. It was the breath of her life, even and noiseless. The result was that while each and all rejoiced in her sanctity, few thought of stopping to consider about it; and, perhaps, with the exception of

Father Netherby, none had seriously taken the trouble to arrive at the conclusion, that that every day sweetness — that even-handed justice in all things—that harmony which you listened to without surprise because it was so perfect, could only spring from hidden depths of real holiness.

How many of God's saints pass their lives scarcely observed, and scarcely recognised as such! It is not all who recognise heroism to be heroism, when they only see it in the garb of every-day life.

As Rose began to feel less the pressure of her sorrow, and to occupy her thoughts more about those around her, it grew upon her that on the whole it was a strange life they lived at Raymond Castle. These three people, Lord Clifford, Teresa, and herself, one so silent and sad, the other two allowed to do much what they liked, but somewhat unaided in their wishes or pursuits; it was so different from what it had been when her own dear parents were alive, and when the books she read, the music she played,

the walks she took, were each and all a matter of interest and comment with those around her. Used to reside a great deal abroad and to see friends and guests at her father's house, the isolation of Raymond Castle and its inhabitants struck her as very extraordinary. She had hardly liked to allude to it, thinking that perhaps it arose from a delicacy towards herself in the first months of her loss, but at length this very impression seemed to make it incumbent on her to release them from the obligation of being so dull. One day, therefore, when she and Teresa were bending over their work-frames, she broke the silence by saying :

“Teresa, you seem to have very few neighbours here. Nobody ever calls, and yet I think you must have exactly the same neighbourhood we had at Nutley. Do you not think it is strange no one comes to see us?”

Teresa paused before making any reply. It was not easy for her to know what to

say. She was unwilling to startle Rose by telling her that it had long been so, and was not likely to change; and, moreover, it was difficult for her, a dutiful and loving daughter, to acquaint Rose with the fact that her father was shunned and disliked. At length she said :

“Yes, we have the same neighbourhood of course, the two houses being so close together; and I think, perhaps, Rose, whenever you feel equal to it, you might call yourself on some of your old friends, and so show them that you would be glad to meet them again. Or, under all the circumstances of your not having been out anywhere since our loss, and of your being now a resident in a new place, it would be better if you wrote to one or two of those you are most intimate with, and told them how glad you would be if they would come and see you. And then, you know, by degrees, they can tell the others.”

“But, Teresa, do *you* never call on these people?”

“Yes, dear, I do call on several, and they are very kind and glad to see me, but they very seldom come here.”

“And now, dear Teresa,” said Rose, suddenly resolving to get at the truth, “do tell me, once for all, why is this?”

“It is a painful subject to me, Rose, but I fear the fact is my father is not popular.”

“Well,” said Rose, “that may be, but a whole neighbourhood does not generally avoid a house like this, as if the plague were in it, merely because its master has a gloomy manner and does not know how to make himself agreeable. There must be some other reason, Teresa. Surely, dear cousin, you will not mind telling me.”

The blood mounted to Teresa’s cheek at these words, and she hesitated. At last, reflecting that sooner or later Rose must hear something of it, and that, on the whole, it was best it should be from herself, she said:

“Some time ago, Rose, and when I was still at the convent in Paris, there were

some evil reports respecting my poor father. Whether it was that he never took the trouble to contradict them or not, I cannot tell, but it is certain people have shunned him ever since."

Rose started from her seat; her quick ear detected the tremor in her voice with which Teresa spoke these last words, and kneeling down by her with one hand on her shoulder, she said :

"My poor Teresa, I have given you pain by my questions. And now I remember to have heard something about all this before, and I remember, too, something that was said to me when after my poor father's death, I was told that he had left my uncle my sole guardian. I did not attach any meaning to the words then; now," she added, sorrowfully, "I understand all."

"Rose," said Teresa, pushing aside her work, and turning round to the kneeling girl at her side, "sooner or later we must have come upon this painful subject, and it is just as well it should be now. You could

not have lived long at Raymond Castle without knowing there is a blight upon the place—a curse I had almost said. You have touched without meaning it, sweet Rosey, a cord that vibrates most painfully in my heart, and from henceforth you and I can have no secrets from each other on this subject. Rose, my poor father is a marked man. It is not for his daughter to know or to inquire into that past which has made him what we see him. I do not know, neither do I ask. Whatever it may be, if I knew it I should never love him the less—I should only pity him the more; but I do not wish to know. My duty is plain. I must devote myself to him in every possible way, and pray for him every hour of my life. Perhaps in the end, Rose, I may obtain my desire, and my poor father may become a happier man. I have, indeed, every reason to hope it. There is a great change from when I first came, and every day and every event that occurs seems to bring out more cause for hope.

Rose, dear Rose, I would gladly give my life for the welfare of my dear father."

"Let me join you, dear Teresa, in this holy effort," said Rose, her eyes full of tears. "And as for me, I am content to forego seeing my friends here if the attempt would bring him any annoyance."

"No, Rose; I think, on the contrary, it would be better to try whether between us we cannot bring about a kinder state of feeling with regard to my father. The groundwork was laid by your dear father, Rose, and had mine but followed it up after my uncle's death, I feel quite sure all would have been well; but since his brother's death, he has sunk back into his old gloom more than I had hoped it would ever be possible for him to do again. I hardly thought he would have felt it so much. And now he keeps himself so shut up that he gives no one a chance of being friendly with him, except, you know, the Redcliffes," added Teresa, with a slight blush, "and he is always glad to see them. As to all the

other people, if they really knew him they could not shrink from him in the way they seem to do now. Some evening when we are all sitting together, you shall say something about inviting your friends to see you, and then we shall know what he wishes about it. I am sure it would be better for himself not to be so much alone."

"And now, Teresa," said Rose, "that we have got upon this difficult and painful subject, I have another question to ask you, about my cousin Robert. Why is he never here? when is he coming? and why do I never hear you talk about him? I think if I had a brother I should be so fond of him I should never want any other companion."

"My dear Rose, that subject is a more painful one than the other. I know very little of my brother. I have very seldom seen him, and when I have seen him, I have felt far more miserable about him than about my poor father, except that as I love my father very tenderly and devotedly, my heart is more occupied with the trouble

connected with him than with that about Robert. You know Robert has been brought up entirely away from us, and, I am afraid, in a very undesirable manner. I suppose my father did not know the bad influences to which his son was exposed, or that he had no one to advise him on the subject, though I think when I was much younger, I used to overhear your father talking to mine about Robert, and remonstrating with him. And I remember dear aunt Angela seeming quite angry, and saying Robert would be utterly ruined, body and soul; though what exactly she meant I do not know. But the truth is, Robert is not at all what I wish I could see him. I am afraid he is fond of low company. They say he gambles: they say many things it breaks my heart to hear. When he comes home, we see but little of him. He is always out shooting with that Italian servant of my father's, Vincenzo, whom I cannot bear. I see next to nothing of him, and when I try to talk to my father about

him he appears to dislike the subject. He looks grave and sad, and says but little. There is another thing, too, dear Rose (now that we are on the subject of the state of this unhappy house), I never can understand, and that is about Vincenzo. I am sure my father dislikes him, even while he appears to trust him, and I cannot therefore make out why he keeps him."

"It is true, Teresa, I have noticed something strange in Vincenzo's manner to my uncle, only I, you know, am used to Italian servants, and they are allowed to be much more familiar than an English gentleman would think it possible to permit in this country. No harm seems to come of it there, and they often make very devoted servants; but it is not exactly that I object to in Vincenzo. He has a way of looking at my uncle that makes me feel quite uncomfortable, and yet though my uncle appears to feel it he never takes any notice. Perhaps, you know, dear Teresa, it may be that when your poor father was

much younger and living abroad, Vincenzo was with him ; and you know it may make your father uncomfortable to be reminded by seeing Vincenzo of those times of which he, perhaps, thinks with regret."

"Only then," said Teresa, "it seems so odd not to part with him. But I fancy an old servant sometimes gets such a hold over you that it seems impossible to send them away. I wish my father would do so. I know Father Netherby has not a good opinion of Vincenzo, from something he one day said to me. He spoke to me about him in the hope I might influence my father to get rid of him before Robert came home. I did attempt it, but I found it would not do at all."

"Why, was Lord Clifford angry?" asked Rose.

"He *was* angry. He told me never to speak to him on the subject again. I remember his words. He said, 'I choose to keep Vincenzo. The man who is good enough for me, is good enough for my son.'

I am very sorry I was not more successful about it, for Robert will soon be coming back, and if Vincenzo really does help him to get into mischief I shall be very unhappy at feeling I dare not speak to my father about it any more."

"Oh, Teresa, how sad it all is," said Rose, after a brief pause, the tears in her eyes, and as if she were taking in the misery and wretchedness of the whole mystery that hung about that house. "What will become of us two poor girls, shut up in this gloomy castle? Teresa," continued Rose, turning crimson as she spoke, "what would Andrea say if he could see his poor little English Rose so sad and so dull."

"Nipped by our cold atmosphere and the frosts of Raymond Castle," answered Teresa, with a bright smile. "No, no, my darling, something must be done about it before it gets as bad as that. You have only been here eight months as yet. It is too soon to begin to despair. So then, Rosey dear, you still think about Andrea Orsini?"

“ Oh, Teresa ! I shall never think of any one else. You know we have been together since our childhood, and though, of course, that alone might not have made me care for him, we saw so much of each other last year in Italy, that I have grown to believe I was one day to become his wife ; and now you know, Teresa, there seems no reason why this should not be ; but instead of that, I am shut up here, and perhaps he never will come to England again, and I shall never go back to Italy. So, Teresa, it is all over, quite over, and I shall never be happy again.”

Rose burst into tears as she uttered these last words, and hid her face on Teresa's shoulder.

“ You silly little Rosey,” said Teresa, tenderly, “ are there no posts in these days, and is it not possible to find out a little how matters are going on in the Eternal City ? Besides, child, you have already received letters from the princess, and nothing could be kinder or more affectionate than they were.”

“Yes, certainly,” said Rose, looking a little brighter; “but she did not say *much* about Andrea.”

“No, Rose, it would not have been delicate to have done so thus soon. She sends you the assurance of Andrea’s deep sympathy, and great anxiety that you should not allow your troubles to affect your health, and she begs you to write often, as otherwise, she says, she shall be unable to keep Andrea from committing all sorts of follies in the excess of his anxiety. Why, Rosey, what would you have more?”

“That is all true, Teresa, but still she says nothing of Andrea’s coming over to see me, or—or—to fetch me away.”

“That will all come in time, Rose; at present it would be too soon to mention the subject; and had the princess done so it might have had the appearance of an over-anxiety to secure your fortune to her son; for you know, Rose, you are now a great heiress, and the prince and the princess, and Andrea himself, would feel that to try and

influence your feelings so immediately on your father's death would not have been likely to please your English relations, nor (had you reflected upon it) yourself."

"I never did reflect upon it, Teresa. I had forgotten all about my having money. I quite see now that I have been unjust to Andrea. Of course I could not marry yet," said Rose, looking sadly at her black dress, "and I should make but a very sorrowful bride. It is not that. I could not have the heart to do it. But, somehow, Teresa, I feel as if I should be safer if Andrea were in England. You will not be shocked, dear cousin, will you? I have a feeling sometimes, particularly when I lie awake at night, that you and I are not safe here. There is something so lonely about it, and there are several of the servants besides Vincenzo that I don't like; and then, my uncle is so gloomy—I was going to say cross. In short, altogether, dear Teresa, it seems to me just as if you and I were shut up in an enchanted castle, like the princesses in a

fairly tale, and that some dark night we might be murdered, or something dreadful happen to us."

"Rosey," said Teresa, "you must not let your imagination run away with you like that. You will make yourself really unhappy if you do so, and destroy your power of being useful to others. No, no, my darling little cousin, no one will murder you; no one will crush the bright petals of my sweet Rose and trample them into the dust. I would die for you, Rose, if it came to that, and I could do it. But, in truth, you must not let such fancies work upon your brain."

"How good you are, Teresa, and how wise. I really do think, Teresa, you would quite quietly and gladly give up your own life if you thought by doing so you could greatly benefit another."

A strange light flitted over Teresa's beautiful face as Rose said these words. She raised for a moment her full dark eyes, and a tear glistened in each. Her delicate lips

parted for a moment as if suspended in an aspiration ; then looking down on the fair girl still kneeling before her, she put her hand on the rich golden curls of that graceful head, and kissed Rose's pure brow.

“ Gladly, my darling, would I die for you ; gladly would I give up a life that I only care to hold while God shall please, if by doing so I could make you safer or happier. ‘ Greater love hath no man than this, that a man should lay down his life for his friends.’ He who uttered those words laid down His own life for His enemies. Perhaps He would accept the sacrifice at the hands of His handmaiden, if I could lay down mine for His friends and for mine. It may seem to you almost absurd, Rose, but as I desire to live only for Him, so, if I could, I would die for Him ; and you know He has also said, ‘ Inasmuch as ye did it for one of the least of them, ye did it unto Me ;’ and often, Rose, a strange feeling, a strange hope comes over me that in some way I may do more service in my death

than I can do in my life. But these are wild words, Rose, and would almost give you the right to quote against me what I have just been saying to you about allowing your imagination to run away with you. So now we will talk to you no more in this strain."

Thus did those two innocent girls betray the inmost thoughts of their hearts. Rose's affection for the companion of her infancy gave a depth and intensity to a nature that but for one ruling influence might have wanted in interest. She was not brave and grand like Teresa; she was childlike and simple, but pure and sweet as the flower whose name she bore. Teresa's guiding motive was higher and nobler. The light of another world had fallen upon her, and she walked through this life as one who saw far beyond it; and yet it was only from time to time that she thus betrayed the depths of her soul and the vast superiority of her character. In the ordinary events of life she was ever the brightest and the most.

cordial of any. Judicious, yet gay ; serene, but not inanimate.

But in that day when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed, the bright phalanx of God's now hidden saints will stand forth in the firmament of heaven like the midnight stars of the southern skies.

It was impossible but that a character like Teresa's should have great influence over all who approached her ; and without Rose being aware of it her own mind was gradually expanding and perfecting by intercourse with her cousin. Had it not been for the intellectual brightness and perpetual charm of Teresa's society, Raymond Castle would certainly have been a dull home. Lord Clifford seldom appeared, except at meals and in the evening, when he rarely looked up from his book. His manner showed a settled gloom which amounted to moroseness. It was a subject of bitter pain and constant anxiety to Teresa ; for though her father's manner was, if anything, even more affectionate to his daughter, yet he

saw much less of her than he had done before Rose's arrival. He seemed to think he was acting selfishly whenever he called her away from her cousin; and when she would offer to sit or walk alone with him he put her off, though in a sad, regretful way, as if he thought it a duty to give up Teresa's society to Rose, and himself to keep aloof. This was a severe trial to Teresa, whose whole affection was set upon her father. Even Rose, her constant companion, had not the faintest idea of how it preyed upon Teresa's heart, nor of the bitter tears she shed alone in her chamber, nor of the many alms and prayers that were offered to obtain from heaven for her father a happier state of mind, and for herself the delight of witnessing it. Poor innocent child! little did she know, and little could she ever have understood had she known it, of the depths of wretchedness in that unhappy man's heart. But even had she known it, the only result would have been to add earnestness to her prayers. Horror,

indeed, would have seized her had she seen in her father a murderer, but compassion and love for the poor erring and lost soul would have mastered every other feeling, and added intensity to her affection.

It is ever so. The greater the purity the more power does it give the possessor over vice. And the innocent walk unscathed, bringing God's grace along with them through the lowest haunts of evil, where others could not pass a moment undefiled.

Una lays her hand in security on the savage lion's mane, and leads him by a hair.

It was a new pleasure to Rose to find she had money enough to spend in doing good, and at first Teresa had to check the exuberance of her charitable plans, and the amount of the outlay. Very soon her name was well known as the dispenser of innumerable comforts. It would have been curious to a stranger to watch the way they were received, as the two cousins went from

house to house. While Rose was everywhere *welcomed* as the kind and benevolent lady to whom they owed so much, Teresa was *worshipped*—as though she had been the guardian angel that had brought her. One word from Teresa had something more supernatural in its charity than all the gifts of her amiable but more ordinary companion. And without reflecting on it or even being aware of it, the poor did homage to the higher virtue.

The only person with whom she had ever come in contact, and who remained impervious to her good influence, was the unhappy Robert. When they had been at the castle together for rare and brief intervals, he seemed to shrink from intercourse with his sister. He could not hate her; but he appeared to fear her: the transparent candour of her character was in too great contrast with his own dark and secret thoughts, and he held aloof from her with the fear that vice has of virtue.

That same evening it was agreed that

Teresa should say something to her father about Rose's wish to renew intercourse with her old friends in the neighbourhood. Rose felt it was impossible to have them coming to the house, and perhaps stopping to luncheon with her, without previously ascertaining whether their doing so would be agreeable to her uncle. It was the more necessary as, though Teresa had the same acquaintances as Rose, she had seen very little of them at the castle. She would sometimes spend the day with some of them; but when they called on her their visits were brief, and chiefly made with a view of engaging her to accompany them on some expedition. Teresa began, as soon as they were all settled at their various occupations in the drawing-room, when dinner was over, by saying :

“ Rose and I have been thinking, dear father, that we might write to the Redcliffe's, and ask them to come and lunch with us next week, as it is a long time since we have seen them.”

“Have you not called upon them, Teresa, lately?”

“Yes, once; and they twice upon me, when Rose first came here and before she saw any one. Then they went to London; and though I have had several notes from the girls we have not met since they returned.”

“You should certainly see them, my dear Teresa. I am not very fond of having guests in my house, but I have a very great regard for the Redcliffes, and they are true friends of yours, Teresa. Moreover, you two girls must not be allowed to mope to death; so, if Rose likes, we will ask the Redcliffes, and any other of your neighbours you wish to have, Teresa, let them come. I need not appear, you know.”

“But, my dear father, why should you not appear? That is just what we want you to do. We do not like having company even to luncheon, if you, like a savage old bear, always shut yourself up in your den.”

“ I dare say I shall be out in the grounds somewhere, and not in my den at all, my dear : so do not think about me. Rose has always Madame de Bray to chaperon her, and as for you Teresa, with your old head on young shoulders, I never can realize you want a chaperon at all.”

“ I am sure, uncle, no one can say *I* am giddy,” said Rose, pretending to look aggrieved.

“ And nobody did say it, still less think it, my dear niece. It never would have entered my head as possible, unless you had, by speaking, reminded me of the proverb, “ *Qui s’excuse s’accuse.*” At the same time, I do not believe I look upon you as such a wise old grandame as Teresa. I almost believe she never was a child ; but, being the spirit of some ancient sage, consented to seem like a child, and then to grow up into a woman for the sake of giving some consolation to an old misanthrope, like me. But where is

the real chaperone, Madame de Bray, this evening? she has never appeared since dinner."

"She told me she was going into the village, to see some poor woman, and begged we would excuse her," replied Rose. "She promised to come here as soon as she returned."

"Well, you had better make known to her your intention with respect to inviting the Redcliffes, and anything else of the kind you want to do. And I must hear what madame says. I know nothing about what is proper for young ladies, and she must advise me."

"One would think," said Rose, "you had never had a daughter of your own."

"I have a daughter; but not a young lady, as I had the honour of explaining before. Teresa was fifty when she was born, and I am afraid to calculate the accumulated amount of wisdom of which she is now the living representative."

The girls laughed. They were pleased

to see Lord Clifford in such an agreeable humour, and they began to argue well from their scheme about receiving their friends and making the old castle a little more cheerful.

When Madame de Bray entered, her opinion was asked, and as it entirely coincided with that of her two pupils, the note of invitation was immediately written to the Redcliffes, to be sent by a groom on horseback next day.

“Teresa,” said Rose, “may I add how pleased you will be to see them too?”

Teresa hesitated, then remembered that as the letter was written to Lady Redcliffe, and that moreover in her character of mistress of the house she also must be named in the invitation, so that it could not in any way personally compromise her, she replied :

“Yes, say so by all means.”

On the day appointed the Redcliffes arrived. Lady Redcliffe and Clara, and Agnes, and Mr. Cecil Redcliffe, the one individual with whom Teresa had been afraid

of compromising herself by sending any message in Rose's note.

Early that morning Roger had called Teresa into his study, and had said to her that he was very anxious Rose should not find the time pass heavily, but that her home in his house should be a happy one.

"I feel that I personally can do very little to make it so. I have done what I could in giving up, for her sake, the great comfort of my life, the pleasure of having you much with me. But in doing that, Teresa, I am breaking myself in for a still greater separation which I suppose is in store for me one of these days."

"What can you mean, my dear father?" said Teresa, looking aghast.

"I mean, my dear child, that I must make up my mind, sooner or later, to give you up to be married; and as I have long been meaning to say something to you on the subject, I may as well at once tell you that if ever you felt young Redcliffe

could find favour in your eyes, much as I dread losing you I should feel obliged to consent."

"My dear father," said Teresa, "why will you torment yourself with such thoughts? I have no intention of leaving you. No one I have ever seen would tempt me to give up my only happiness—that of being with you, my own beloved father. If only I could feel that I succeeded in making you less sorrowful, I should desire nothing else, and no one shall have any claim on me while I can be a comfort to you."

"And that you are, my dear child," said Roger, with visible emotion.

"Only one thing can do it lastingly and thoroughly," added she, standing up suddenly, and speaking with energy. "Listen to me, dear father. Give me leave to write to the vicar-apostolic, and tell him, what I know to be the case, that Father Netherby is anxious he should, if possible, visit this part of the country before long.

Let me say you will be glad to receive him here. The last barriers will be broken then, father, which still divide you from greater peace. Say but one little word to your own child."

And she hid her face in his bosom, waiting for that word.

The word was spoken! It was received in silence, but in deep joy; and the subject never again alluded to by father or daughter.

About a month from that date the vicar-apostolic arrived at Raymond Castle. Perhaps it was because he was only to remain two nights that none of the Catholics in the neighbourhood were invited to meet him, although, of course, the news of his visit soon spread. One thing surprised all the members of the family very much, except Lord Clifford and Teresa, who took no notice of the remarks made on the subject. The morning of the day he left, Dr. Challoner summoned his servant soon after daybreak, and said mass

before any of the household were known to be astir, though Lord Clifford was found to have been up and dressed at an unaccountably early hour. The vicar made no allusion to the ladies about having done so, and shortly after breakfast took his leave.

CHAPTER VI.

UNDER THE LIME TREES.

IT was not very long after the incidents we have just recorded, before Raymond Castle presented an aspect it had not worn for many years. The presence of two lovely girls, both of them heiresses ; Roger Clifford's improved fortune, and still more, his improved spirits, gradually brought about more social intercourse than had existed since the time when Roger lived there before Teresa's return ; and in this case the society was of a very different kind, being cheerful and innocent instead of noisy and dissipated. It must not, however, be supposed that Roger contributed very

much personally in promoting anything of the sort. Nothing now could make him otherwise than a sad, silent man. Nevertheless he not only did not object to whatever could add pleasure to his niece's and daughter's life, but he contributed everything save his own presence. Of that he was very chary, doing what was absolutely necessary, and doing that with all his old charm and refinement, but, on the whole, continuing to be the same recluse amongst his books and his thoughts that he had become the last few years.

Robert's visits to his father's house were few and brief. He continued to spend his time chiefly in London and Paris. There he had run greatly into debt. The first time his father relieved him from his embarrassments, with only a few words of very grave advice, obtaining in return a most solemn assurance from Robert that the offence should not be repeated.

A very short time, however, elapsed before his affairs were in a worse state than

before. This time his father was more angry, and finally, would only again set him free on condition that Robert gave up his present habits of life, and consented to live quietly at his father's house. Robert, in his brief visits to Raymond Castle had been greatly struck by Rose; and it is probable that in consenting to his father's conditions, the prospect of seeing more of his pretty cousin consoled him partially for having to live in the country. Possibly also he was not insensible to the great advantage that would accrue to himself could he win her affections, and become possessor of her large inheritance. Be that as it may, he played his part so well on his return to the castle that Roger was not without hope he might, after all, end in being a steady and respectable member of society, now that he had sown his very plentiful supply of wild oats. Teresa also, with her heart full of charitable thoughts about everybody, was only too rejoiced to see her brother apparently more settled,

and innocently encouraged him in joining herself and Rose in their riding and walking excursions. Madame de Bray was at this time absent, and thus the three young people were thrown exclusively together.

The novelty of such a life was not without its charm to Robert. He had lived very little with ladies, and he had fancied their society would be dull. It was a real surprise to him to find that the lively talk of the two beautiful girls, the quick perceptions of Teresa and the childlike archness of Rose had a charm he had not found in the society he had hitherto frequented, where more liberty, not to say license, was permitted. It would have been well if Robert had contented himself exclusively with the amusements his father's house afforded him. But he could not be always with his cousin, and as, when people are evil disposed, the means of going astray are rarely wanting, Robert, with the unfailing aid of Vincenzo, continued to pursue the same course he had done hitherto. The

only real change was, and for this he was chiefly indebted to Vincenzo, that he contrived better to conceal it: and all along Rose was constantly in his thoughts. Rose's beauty—Rose's fortune, tormented him by day and haunted him by night. He made no effort to resist the fascination of her presence: on the contrary, he drank down the poison knowingly and deliberately. He had taught himself to believe that in the end the greatness of his passion for his beautiful cousin would remove all obstacles, or that if he could only persuade her of the intensity of his affection, he should have but little difficulty in overcoming her scruples, if those obstacles appeared insurmountable. Of his father's consent and assistance he never entertained any serious doubt. Nor was he very diffident with respect to his ultimate ascendancy over his cousin. In spite, however, of his self-confidence, he was constantly thrown back by finding that Rose seemed to remain perfectly unconscious of his sentiments towards her.

She did not repel his attentions; she accepted them simply and sweetly, as she might have done from a brother. To a man of Robert's character this soon became perfectly maddening; and in his paroxysms of rage and despair his only confidant was the wretched Vincenzo.

In the same oily and subservient way that he had crept into the father's secrets, he now, and with greater ease, possessed himself of all that passed in the heart of the son. Under no circumstances would it have suited Vincenzo to remain ignorant of any secret that was going on in the castle, or in the mind of its inmates. Probably nothing took place within the walls that the soft-footed villain did not penetrate. He acted on the principle that knowledge is power, and in pursuit of knowledge he would be at the trouble to acquaint himself with details which might have appeared quite insignificant and beneath his notice. He knew well enough that the merest straw will suffice to tell which way the wind

blows; and in his long experience he had found that the great facts of a domestic drama often hang together on one tiny thread. If you have that one clue in your hand, you can unroll the whole; without it, you are lost in doubt. So the worthy man spent his time in gathering up the ends of all the small threads of events scattered through the length and breadth of the populous castle. If the poor scullery maid thought herself, with her humble affection for the cow-herd, beneath the notice of Mr. Vincenzo, she erred as completely as the young heir would have done, who found himself the object of redoubled solicitude, just at the time when the services of a clever dependant like Vincenzo were becoming more necessary to him. The valet insinuated himself into his master's confidence as soon as he began to perceive by Robert's absent manner and occasional fits of gloomy silence that his sentiments towards Rose were assuming a serious character. Vincenzo had had foresight enough to imagine this

would very probably be the result of the young man being thrown into frequent intercourse with his fair cousin, and long before the fact, had made up his mind as to the line he should adopt, and how he should make it turn to his own advantage. In truth the castle was becoming a home but little adapted to Vincenzo's habits and inclinations. There was reigning an atmosphere of peace and tranquillity which had been gradually on the increase ever since Teresa's return more than two years previous; the household was orderly and well conducted, and even the master—his old accomplice and his victim—was an entirely altered man, and daily becoming less under his own evil influence. In proportion as religion and morality triumphed in the castle did it become too hot for Vincenzo; and, moreover, his gains were diminishing in every department in which hitherto he had exercised control.

Teresa was by this time a wise and clever mistress, and looked into affairs herself,

aided by the experience and undoubted honesty of the good Mrs. Brown ; and she had made several representations to her father on domestic matters which he had attended to. Vincenzo, therefore, had made up his mind to leave ; but he had equally determined not to do so till by some stroke of safe but special villany he had secured a good pecuniary indemnification for the comfortable home he was about to quit. With this in view, he had gradually relieved Lord Clifford of a portion of his obsequious attentions, and transferred them to his son. And while Roger quailed when he thought of this man haunting the steps of a child of his, he felt that by having the fellow less about his own person he had it more in his power to dismiss him the first opportunity that should present itself.

Vincenzo had begun his manœuvring by occasionally mentioning Miss Rose's name in a casual manner, and watching the effect produced on Robert's countenance. He would observe to him, as if accidentally,

that Rose was sitting alone in a particular part of the garden, and would then watch the young man with the conviction that before long he would direct his steps to the spot named.

Teresa had gone out driving alone to pay a visit, and Rose was sitting reading under the shade of the lime trees at the end of the terrace, when Robert, having received an intimation to that effect from Vincenzo, came down the broad terrace walk and joined her. Rose was sitting on a very low chair with a book in her lap, and her work lying on a small table near her. Robert thought what a pretty picture she made in her white dress against the dark green boughs, the flickering light falling on her rippling golden hair, and dancing in and out in bright flakes upon the folds of her dress; now lighting up the red sash that bound her little waist, now toying with the gold buckle on her tiny foot, as it peeped from beneath the folds of muslin. Robert threw himself at full length in front of her, and

Rose, finding her solitude broken in upon, shut the book, and took up her work.

After the first slight greeting, and an inquiry of what had become of Teresa, both were silent. It was one of those rare but beautiful hot days we sometimes have in October ; the flowers were all ablaze in the garden-beds ; the bees were gathering a few more unexpected drops of nectar to add to their winter store. Now and then a leaf, the forerunner of his fellows, loosened from the parent branch, came trembling down to die on the damp earth. The thrush had resumed his spring notes, but with much more frequent repetition of his melancholy monotonous call than when he was in full song in the month of May ; like the querulous repetition of the memory of an old and lost love. It was a scene for silence rather than speech ; and while Robert watched and thought, Rose was silent from an instinct that, without knowing why, made her feel a little awkward. Lately she had always felt this if she found herself alone

with Robert, and almost unconsciously she had avoided meeting him, unless Teresa or her uncle were present. Now there was no help for it; but she sat stitching, with her eyes on her work. Perhaps she felt what she could not see—the long burning gaze of the recumbent figure lying a few paces off. Suddenly the wind stirred in the leaves above her, and with one wild swoop the warm breeze came roughly by, and catching the piece of embroidery then lying on her lap, whirled it away till it caught in one of the hanging branches to her left. With a light laugh she rose to disentangle it. Robert did the same. Her little fingers were busily untwisting the muslin; Robert helping, side by side. The white sleeve of her dress brushed his cheek as her arm was raised amid the green leaves. Each held the work; and as he put it into her hands he caught her wrists, and detained her for one moment, and with an expression she had never seen before looked full into her face. Shame and anger suffused the deep

blush over face and throat, then terror left her deadly pale. She wrenched her hands out of the grasp of her cousin's, and stepping back like a queen, she raised her head proudly, and exclaimed :

“Robert, what do you mean : how dare you be so rude ?”

“Forgive me, Rose ; I am much to blame. I had no right to startle you. Sit down one moment, my dear little cousin,” he said, in a tender, but altered, tone ; “if you do not, I shall think I have for ever offended you. Why should you be so angry with me ? I was, perhaps, a little rough ; but are we not cousins ; and would you not excuse in me what you would not in another ?”

Rose had sat down, because [she could hardly] stand ; but her manner was not less displeased, as she replied :

“No, Robert ; certainly not, when you act as no cousin should do—nor, indeed, any man. I do not know what you mean, and you frightened me.”

“Oh, Rose! do not say that; listen to me this once, and say that you forgive me.”

And then he told her all. It was the best love he had known, and the nearest approach to real love; but even so it was not good and pure, for that it was no longer in Robert's perverted nature to be. He used all the arguments that passion could invent, but the only effect upon Rose was to frighten her still more.

Finding she remained quite untouched, he tried whether family pride could influence the young heiress. He alluded to the fact that by their marriage the whole of that great property would remain still attached to the old and noble name of Clifford. Finally, finding he obtained no response, he reverted to their being cousins, and assured her that he would be the last to propose to her anything that would shock her principles (and here he found it difficult to speak as if those principles had any hold on himself), but represented to her that as the

advantages of their union would be so great, no difficulty would exist as to obtaining a dispensation. Rose had hardly known how to check him in his long and hurried speech, but when he reached this point she stood up as if preparing to leave, and said, gently and firmly :

“No, Robert ; it can never be. You can never be more to me than my cousin. And if that relationship did not exist between us, I should still say that what you wish can never be. I am very sorry, Robert, if I have pained you. I did not think this could ever happen. It has surprised and startled me. But even were it not so, I should never have any other answer to give. I hope you will endeavour to think no more about it. For my part I will not mention anything that has passed.”

For a moment a lurid shade passed over Robert's brow ; his eyes flashed, he bit his lips, and he muttered :

“My home is lost to me if you betray me, Rose. I could not remain here another

hour, were my secret known to my father and Teresa."

"No, Robert," said the generous girl, her voice trembling with emotion; "I will tell no one. You must behave well, and not betray anything by your manner. I should be greatly distressed if you had to leave your home on my account. You may depend on my saying nothing."

For one moment she laid her hand on his to show she wished to part friends and that he might trust her, and then turned and walked back to the house alone, little dreaming of the snares and fetters that would be forged out of that generous promise of secrecy.

That evening Robert left a message to say he should dine at a friend's house in the neighbourhood. Whether he actually did so, or had means of getting food sent to him in his own den, the former gun-room, it is certain he sat alone there through the long hours of the evening, thinking deeply. They were dark and troubled thoughts that fur-

rowed that white brow and clenched that gentlemanly hand, and made the young man so restless in his movements. He looked like some wild animal, beautiful but dangerous, enclosed in a cage and stalking across its narrow boundary with impatient strides.

The refusal he had met with had added tenfold intensity to his passion, and heightened incalculably the value of Rose's possessions in his avaricious mind. Nothing should baulk him. Time and perseverance, stratagem and deceit, should be his auxiliaries; but it must be that Rose, and Nutley Hall with its broad lands, should be his. He pondered over her manner during the last decisive interview, and over all he had been able to observe these months past of her character, and he had not, deceitful as he was himself, a shadow of a doubt that that fair young girl, all innocence and timidity, would keep her promise of secrecy faithful to the last. Upon this certainty he resolve to act. He decided on sounding his

father with respect to a marriage with Rose ; but he would do so without letting Lord Clifford suppose that he had been so rash as to broach the question himself with Rose without reference to Lord Clifford ; still less would he betray that his feelings were seriously implicated.

Robert retained his earlier impressions of his father's ambitious character, and beyond thinking him grown dull and moody, he had not realized that that character had undergone a complete change. Therefore he easily arrived at the conviction that Lord Clifford would encourage the plan, and use his influence with his ward to bring it about. He felt sure enough of his powers of reserve to prevent his father from seeing more into his heart than he intended, and so of hiding the fact that any strong feelings existed there which might make it undesirable that he should remain at home in the same house with his cousin. It would not do to betray himself sufficiently to his father for the latter to feel bound to send him

away, as he was thoroughly determined that even if he did not find in Lord Clifford the ally he expected, he would not for that give up his pursuit, although he might have to alter his tactics.

His own hot blood rushing through his veins, and the strong hard beat of his pulse, forced upon him the conviction that suspense and inaction were the two trials he was least able to meet; and, moreover, for every reason it was wiser to ascertain his father's sentiments at once. He passed a sleepless night, watching for the dawn, and resolved that the next morning should decide the question so far as Lord Clifford was concerned. There was little cordiality of manner between the father and the son at any time; but Robert knew that whatever might have been the sins committed against him in his early education, his father of late times had shown himself indulgent and liberal. The whole atmosphere of the house, so greatly in contrast with former times, showed him that his best chance of

success would be in assuming a high moral tone, and bringing forward principle more than passion or avarice; and therefore he resolved on entering on the question of the near relationship, and on the possibilities of this objection being removed by ecclesiastical authority. There was a special advantage to Robert in being able to fence and case himself in hypocrisy, because it obliged him so perfectly to act a part that it made the concealment of his passion more easy. He was going to do so as thoroughly as a dramatist on the boards before the footlights, and the completeness of the disguise was in favour of his keeping his real self entirely out of sight.

At noon on the following day he sauntered into his father's study; and as his appearing there was somewhat unusual, he began by asking if his presence disturbed him. Receiving a reply in the negative, he sat down by the large wood fire, and began slowly piling the glowing embers and adjusting the burning logs, in the way people do

who are either very idle or very preoccupied. At last, with perfect control of voice, he began :

“ I have been wishing, sir, for some days past, to speak to you on a matter of considerable moment to me, but in which I would not take a step, or even allow myself an opinion, without first taking your advice. Would it be convenient to you to hear me now ?”

“ Certainly, Robert,” said Lord Clifford, closing his book and drawing his arm-chair opposite the other side of the fire ; “ what is it you have to say ?”

“ Well, sir,” said Robert, affecting a slight hesitation, “ it can hardly have escaped your consideration that if a young man finds himself living on terms of great intimacy with a very beautiful girl like Rose, it is not unnatural that it should enter his head to think of her in a more serious light than as a mere pleasant companion. And I do not wish to conceal from you that seeing as much of my cousin as I do, I might pos-

sibly get a little touched by a softer sentiment than any I should wish to indulge in before seeing my way a little clearer before me. It is better to know at once what your wishes are likely to be; for of course I should not think of trying what I might do to make Rose like me without first consulting you. Rose is a charming and amiable girl. Our union would unite the great bulk of the Clifford property with your smaller estate (an advantage which I am sure you will not blame me for remembering, even while speaking of what is of more importance). I have been perhaps a little wild and extravagant in the past" (an off-hand confession, made with a show of sincerity that came quite touchingly to the father's heart from the handsome young spendthrift before him); "but if I could obtain a wife like Rose, I ask nothing more than to settle down quietly, and perhaps retrieve the past. It is true we are cousins; but I suppose, sir, when the advantages to be gained are so enormous, a judicious representation

made in the right quarter, would obtain the necessary dispensation."

Roger had listened to this sensible and self-possessed speech with mingled feelings of pleasure and anxiety.

Nothing would have delighted him more than the match; but was that good-looking youth, who had never been anything but a sorrow to him, a proper husband for the ward so sacredly entrusted to him by his eldest brother?

"You rather take me by surprise," rejoined Lord Clifford; "and the question requires reflection. Tell me, Robert, am I to understand that you are in love with your cousin?"

"That is a very home question, sir," replied Robert, with a half-shy smile and a blush. "If I had your authority I *should* be in love with her without any difficulty; but I do not want to go and make a fool of myself for nothing, and therefore I wished to talk it over with you, and if you approved ask you to use your influence, and

express your sentiments on the subject to Rose, before I come forward at all. The fact of our being cousins makes it all the more essential she should know you countenance my pretensions before it would be right or delicate for me to speak."

Roger was immensely pleased with this candour and high principle in his son. He could not conceal from himself that the alliance would give him the highest possible satisfaction, and really it seemed to open the way for such an easy and complete reformation in Robert, that if only Rose could be brought to consent, the welfare and happiness of the family would be for ever cemented by such a union. He promised Robert to speak to Rose about it, but said he should do so without giving her to suppose he was acting by Robert's express desire.

"Because," he added, "if she seems disinclined to receive your addresses, it will be better not to have said anything about you which might make your remaining here

awkward or painful to her. Probably she will at first be indisposed to think about it favourably, for as (very properly) you have not made love to her there has been nothing to induce her to direct her thoughts towards you; therefore even if her first answer is in the negative there can be no necessity for your going away, as she will not know what has passed between us; and if she continues to see you she might gradually grow to the idea after I have once suggested it. Of course if she takes my suggestions willingly there will be no reason why you should not go in and win; a termination, my dear boy, which would give me great pleasure."

And so they forged the fetters for poor Rose, the one in hypocrisy the other in good faith, and the once astute Roger was outwitted by his more sophisticated son.

It was not many days before Roger made an opportunity for a private interview with Rose. He spoke to her in a calm, diplomatic way, in his character of guardian to

herself, and head of the Clifford family. He treated the matter chiefly as one of business and convenience rather than of affection, and in doing this he was actuated by a good motive. His son had not expressed any vehement affection for Rose, and even had he done so Lord Clifford would have hesitated to plead strongly in his son's favour, when the advantages of the alliance were so obviously on his own side.

Rose's fortune made her a great match, and with her noble birth entitled her to look for a welcome entrance into any family of the highest rank in England, or on the continent; and Lord Clifford was quite alive to the possible reproach of having married his ward to his son before he had given her any opportunity of choosing for herself amongst other suitors. He spoke to her with great kindness, and with a sort of deference, which for the first time brought before the young girl's mind a sense of her own importance as an heiress, for though Robert had said a great deal to her on the

subject, the torrent of his passion had prevented her reverting to that part of his interview with her. It was not until the cool, calm discourse of her guardian, full of strangely-blended courtesy and paternal benevolence, put the question before her in all its solemnity, that she realised how much hung upon her decision. Young and inexperienced as Rose was she had an intuitive quickness of perception which generally led her to come to a right conclusion upon any subject put seriously before her. Not even the very cautious way in which Lord Clifford spoke of his son for a moment put it out of her head that Robert had urged his father to speak for him ; and she was justly indignant to find that while she, by her solemn promise of silence to Robert, was precluded from seeking in her guardian's protection any security against Robert's pressing his suit, he had artfully enlisted his father on his own side, while he held back from him the fact that he had already formally proposed for her hand. She felt

the immense disadvantage at which this placed her, and it added to the caution and brevity of her replies. They were perfectly decided in the negative, but they were so little discursive, and she limited herself so exclusively to the fact that she did not wish to marry yet, and that she was sure she should never look upon Robert in any other light than that of a cousin, that the impression left on Lord Clifford's mind was to the effect that her indifference arose from the subject being so new to her. He went so far as to flatter himself that now he had broken up the virgin soil of her imagination, and sown the seed of a thought about affection, love, and marriage, it would develop of itself, and very probably lead to her allowing Robert to pay her attention. Her maidenly reserve was far too great for her to venture upon any allusion to her already deeply-rooted attachment to Andrea. She spoke like a girl who knew nothing about love, and was not inclined to give her attention to the subject, and so the very perfec-

tion of her simplicity produced the same effect that extreme caution might have done, and Lord Clifford was completely deceived. He lost no time in communicating his impressions to Robert, upon whom he urged the greatest possible prudence, at the same time fully authorizing him to remain at the castle and watch his opportunities of making himself agreeable to Rose. Robert thus gained all he expected. He was sure of his father's co-operation and certain that he could remain on the spot, while, having thus put Rose severely to the test, he was more than ever convinced that she was true to her word, and would not break silence, and that consequently she was left very much at his mercy.

For some days after all this had passed he absented himself almost entirely from Rose's society. He wanted to lull her suspicions to sleep, and delude her into thinking he had given it up. He was quite sure that the consequence would be a greater

willingness on her part to treat him kindly, after such evidence of good conduct, when next he thought fit to renew their intercourse, and this was exactly what happened. During the fortnight that they saw very little of him Teresa would frequently wonder what Robert was doing with himself, and Rose as frequently had a perfectly commonplace reason to suggest as the probable cause of his absence. It cost her a great deal to keep anything from Teresa, but the loyal little heart would have gone to the stake before she would have breathed a word calculated to make his home less available and pleasant to the worthless young man who had proposed to her.

In course of time Robert crept gradually back to his former place with his sister and cousin. He did not force himself upon them, and the November weather had made riding and walking less frequent. Still he allowed himself to sit with them occasionally in the drawing-room, and join in their pursuits; not to the extent he had

done before his proposal, but enough to enable him to seize any opening that might allow for pressing his suit.

In spite of all his efforts Rose baffled him. She looked upon the question as quite settled, and it troubled her no more. Having no real experience of what passion in a man might be, she supposed that having said *No* to Robert, and to his father on his account, Robert after keeping away for a fortnight had very sensibly given it up. He was still her cousin, and they could be very good friends, and she saw no reason why they should not be all comfortable together as they had been before that unfortunate day under the lime-trees. And realizing no reason to the contrary, she concluded it was as she wished. It was only by degrees that she perceived the truth, and when she did so her pain and annoyance were extreme.

Robert would return from shooting about four o'clock of the short November days, and steal into his sister's drawing-room,

where the two girls were reading or working. She could not always make her escape, as that would have led to remarks and as effectually betrayed the secret she had promised to keep as if she had told all. And so she was compelled to endure the fitful conduct of her half-mad admirer.

Once or twice he tried to renew the subject; and once, exasperated by his audacity, she had threatened to appeal to his father. Upon this there was a burst of entreaty, expostulation, and dark threats of evils and dangers she did not understand; and then to keep him quiet, or to get rid of him, she again promised to say nothing, if he would only leave her quiet.

Teresa began to notice that something was amiss, and would endeavour to lead Rose to answer her observations on the subject. But she never obtained enough reply to make it appear that Rose was alive to the state of the case, and she shrank from opening her eyes too suddenly. She hinted one day to her father that she

thought Robert was not indifferent to Rose. He did not enlarge on the subject, but only replied with a sigh that he wished Rose could be induced to accept him, and that it would be the saving of Robert.

Teresa longed to tell him of Andrea, but feared that her doing so would be premature, and hesitated as to the right she had to betray her cousin's secret.

. Thus matters were getting worse, and Robert was more and more losing control over himself. Sometimes he would shut himself from them for a whole day, as if he could no longer endure the torture of looking at her placid, beautiful face; at other times he would seek false courage and excitement in drinking, just enough to give a savage character to his tone and manner; and more than once he had startled Rose by coming suddenly upon her with red, glaring eyes, and wild, almost menacing words, and frighten her terribly.

Unable to endure this cruel persecution, she decided upon speaking to Father Ne-

therby about it, and asking his advice as to what she should do to rid herself of a state of things fast getting beyond endurance. By the time she resolved on doing this, she found that Robert's manner became more menacing than ever. He never spoke to her when any one else could overhear him, and his words, far from conveying regard or affection, were cruelly cutting, and often positively insulting.

She now avoided him as much as she possibly could, and he no longer frequented their sitting-room. But once or twice she had met him lurking about in the passage, near her apartment. He would suddenly come from behind a door, or round a corner of the garden-walk, face to face with her. He always seemed to know exactly where to find her; and when they thus met, his countenance and appearance would have chilled the blood of a braver and older woman than little Rose.

She was terribly cramped by the obligations of her fatal promise, and yet she felt

it was only due to herself to let some one into her confidence, and so she resolved to speak, as we have said, to Father Netherby. Even here, she was some time before she could bring herself to enlarge enough upon the subject to leave on the good man any clear and distinct impression of the really alarming and extremely painful facts. Father Netherby was a long time before he seized the notion of how serious it was, and beyond giving her general advice and consolation, he urged nothing for effectually putting her beyond the reach of a danger the extent of which, from the timid and defective description given by Rose, he did not realize.

One evening, early in December, Lord Clifford and the two girls were sitting after dinner, the girls working and talking, Lord Clifford reading, and at the other end of the large room, behind the shadow cast by a dark red curtain, was Robert; meditating perhaps, or perhaps asleep, for he did not speak.

Teresa and Rose were discussing the preparations for some Christmas entertainments that were to be given at the castle towards the end of the month, or early in January.

"I have been telling Rose," said Teresa, to her father, "that if you give the ball you talked of, she ought to wear some of her beautiful diamonds; don't you think so?"

"Indeed I do," said Lord Clifford, looking up good-naturedly from his book. "She has never done so yet, and she ought to try how they suit her, and whether the setting is what people wear now, before she goes to London this year, and she could not have a better opportunity than at the ball given here in her honour. Have you ever put them on, my dear?" he asked.

"Yes, one day Teresa and I amused ourselves with unpacking some of them, and I tried them on her, and she on me; but that is some time ago. I should think the setting

would do very well. You know dear mamma wore them once or twice in Rome, the year before she died. I should not like to have them altered."

"Are they locked up in your room, dearest?" said Teresa.

"Yes, they are in my room, in the top drawer of the chest of drawers. Whether locked or not, I am not sure. I used to keep the key in my dressing-case, but I rather think I have lost it; however, that makes no difference, for I remember the drawer is not locked now."

"You careless child," said Lord Clifford, looking fondly at her; "fancy leaving ten thousand pounds' worth of diamonds lying open in a drawer! I have often been meaning to speak to you about them. You ought to keep what you may want for casual wear, and let the remainder go to the banker's in London. For it will only be when you and Teresa are going out next year that you will want them. However," he added, with a smile, "I suppose you

want the county people to see you in all your jewels for once, so you had better remind me to take them to town when the ball is over; only, pray meanwhile find your key, and keep them locked up."

"Shall I fetch them now, and show them to you, uncle?" said Rose, still child enough, or woman enough, whichever our readers please, to enjoy showing her pretty things and trying them on.

"Do so, by all means," said Lord Clifford, with an arch smile; "we shall all be charmed to have a private rehearsal of Rose's first public appearance in the Clifford diamonds, to say nothing of that extremely beautiful set of diamonds and sapphires, which your poor mother received from the Orsini family on her marriage, and which I remember were the admiration of everybody."

Rose left the room to fetch her jewels. No one remembered Robert, or noticed that he still sat in the shadow of the red curtain. Presently Rose returned with an armful of

velvet cases stamped in gold, and with her mother's initials and baroness's coronet. Teresa acted as tire-woman. Rose was dressed in white silk. She almost always wore white of an evening. The diamonds lit up her bright complexion, and shot brilliant flashes amid the golden glory of her hair. She looked perfectly radiant, crowned with diamonds; diamonds on her neck and bosom, and strings of pearls, with diamond clasps, on her glittering white arms. Hers was a skin that seemed to emit light, as some white flowers appear to do at eventide. They talked it over, and played with the jewels, and laughed together, as girls may do. Roger looked on, amused and pleased; but no one looked towards the silent man at the end of the room, who saw and heard all with clenched teeth, and brow moist with agony. He did not stir; till presently the girls retired to rest, and Roger rose to fetch another book from his study. Then Robert lifted his tall height from the nook where he had sat

crouching, and stalked out of the room to his den, and sank into a chair with a groan.

An hour after, the house was all quiet, and Vincenzo came to the den to see if his young master wanted him. Robert had reached that point of utter desperation when it needs but a word from another to break down all the barriers of secrecy and self-restraint. Vincenzo saw this. He knew pretty well all that had been passing in his master's mind, for as usual he had been constantly picking up the thread of events as a spider does those of his venomous web. He knew that Robert's feelings towards Rose had changed in character. The tenderness had all died out, every vestige of sentiment that might have elevated the nature of his feelings had vanished, and nothing was left but the brute violence of passion, on the verge of turning into the brute force of hate.

After a few brief words of explanation, Vincenzo began in that unmoved, slow way

of speaking that perhaps was natural, or possibly arose from using a language that was foreign to him.

“Don’t you think, sir, we had better go away from here altogether, and not stop where everything you see makes matters worse? I know I do not want to stay in this horrid old castle, where nothing ever happens that has any change in it, and where you, sir, who ought to be the pride and joy of the house, are set aside for two silly girls, one of whom has got all that ought to be yours.”

“Yes, *that ought to be mine*. You may well say that, Vincenzo. Has she not been decking herself out this night before my very eyes, in the Clifford diamonds, maddening me with her beauty, and making me long to crush the life out of her, and stain that white flesh in her own blood.”

“Gently, gently, sir,” said the wily man, pretending to be shocked, but in an encouraging tone. “I never can understand you Englishmen. You talk so rash, and

act so cold; and yet when you have made up your mind to do a bold stroke—and I can't say you want for courage—instead of taking time, and going about it safely and surely, you make a dash at it, and commit a blunder where you only meant to commit a crime; and then you go off to the gallows, and get hung; and it all comes of your being in such a hurry. Per Bacco! I should have thought of it for a month before I should have *talked* of spilling my sweetheart's blood."

"There, Vincenzo, don't bother me. You know I don't mean it, and it is only to you I should say it; but the fact is, I am mad to-night."

"Yes, yes, sir; I know it is only to me, though I am not quite so sure about your not meaning it. Of course, if Miss Rose had consented to your proposal it would have been all right, and I should have been the last man to wish such a pretty piece of womankind to come to any harm; but it is not in nature to see that strip of a

girl standing between you and your late uncle's fortune, which *must* be yours if, as she will not marry you, she would do *something else*."

"It is no use talking about it, Vincenzo. The girl is not going to die. I never saw anybody look less like it."

"How can you tell? Accidents happen every day. People slip down a precipice, with a friend standing close to them who has not power to save them; or they die in their sleep."

"However, Vincenzo, Rose has no heart disease, as the doctors say my sister has."

"When I was in Padua," said Vincenzo, taking apparently no notice of Robert's remark, "there was a poor devil who got into trouble there for killing his wife in her sleep. He was in love with a beautiful girl, and he wanted to get rid of his old lady, and marry her. He meant it to appear that she had died a natural death; and to secure this he must of course avoid all marks of violence. So one night, when

she was fast asleep, he slipped a plaster over his wife's mouth and nose, and then sat upon her till she died."

Robert laughed.

"Why do you laugh, sir?" said Vincenzo, with a sardonic grin. "It is quite true. You see, being her husband, he had no difficulty about getting into her room. I suppose if he had been only her friend, she might have woke and asked him what he wanted, before he got the plaster on; and in that case he would have had to see that she had drunk some sleeping-draught before going to bed, so that she might not hear him come in."

"Well, but he was found out and got into trouble; so, with all his cleverness, he did not escape. How did that come about?"

"Ah! that is the sad part of it," said Vincenzo, in his usual slow, unaccented drawl. "He put the plaster on, and he took it off when she was dead, and it was all right and safe enough, though people wondered

what she died of, and there was some suspicion against him; but the poor fool told his sweetheart what he had done for her sake. The girl did not care for him, and was in love with another man who was younger; so she betrayed him to the authorities, and he was executed. But that was, as you see, all his own fault."

"What was the plaster made of, Vincenzo? It must have been pitch."

"No; it was not, for it was white, and left no stain when you tried to wash it off. I know how it was made."—*And he told him.*

"Ah, that's all very well," said Robert; "but here in England we have got a coroner's inquest to go through in any case of sudden death, so we can't put people out of the way with poisons and plasters as you can in Italy."

"Yes," said Vincenzo, meditatively; "it is a great pity the doctors do not say that Miss Rose has got an hereditary heart disease."

CHAPTER VII.

“VENGEANCE IS MINE; I WILL REPAY,
SAITH THE LORD.”

FOR some days after the scene we have witnessed in the den, Robert absented himself almost entirely from the society of his family. His manner varied from silent moroseness to a sort of exaggerated, supercilious courtesy, which made Rose's blood freeze on the rare occasions when she was obliged to be in his presence. The subject of his conversation with Vincenzo in the den was never resumed by either of the men, but the Italian talked constantly as if he were entirely preoccupied with his desire to leave service and return to Genoa, at the same time throwing out strange hints

about long service and great fidelity demanding more reward than an ordinary servant's gage.

Robert once asked him why he did not speak to his father of his wish to leave ; but Vincenzo had by that time become too much awed by the evident change in Roger's way of thinking and acting, to feel that he had the same power of silently bullying him that he once had.

He hated Roger with all his heart now that he thought he was to a degree a reformed man ; while the very fact of the moral change gave Roger a power over the Italian which made the other afraid of him ; so he seemed to look to Robert to take his father's place, and was constantly throwing out hints of important family secrets never betrayed, all of which ended by becoming a nuisance to Robert, and making him feel he too should be glad when the scoundrel could be got rid of.

Early in December, Lord Clifford was called from home on business, and not

choosing to leave Robert alone in the house with Teresa and Rose, he had suggested to him that he should take the opportunity of carrying out an intention he had had of going to a certain wild part of the county of S——, for woodcock shooting. They were to leave Raymond Castle together in the evening, and to separate half-way. Robert was going to a place called the "Hammer Ponds," and Lord Clifford to London. It happened to be a mild, soft December morning, the day they had fixed for their journey. And Lord Clifford, wishing to call at one of his farms on the hills, had proposed to walk there soon after breakfast with the two girls and Robert, as he wanted to point out a small wood to the latter on his way, which he was talking of cutting down. Robert could not excuse himself from accompanying them. It was just the day for exercise—fresh, but genial. The year was dying out, like an old man with all the tender glory of age without its infirmities. But Rose was not in spirits;

she kept close to her uncle, and talked but little. About three-parts of the way to the farm they had to pass along the ridge of a deep chalk-pit. Their path crossed a small open space between the hanging wood and the edge of the precipice, which might be sixty feet deep. There was a rustic seat under a large beech-tree, and it commanded a beautiful view over the tops of the trees at the base of the hill below the chalk-pit, and far off to the blue horizon, with the tower of Raymond Castle and the grey front of Nutley Hall, in the middle distance. The leaves had not all fallen ; and the tawny beech, the bright-yellow ash, and blue-green oak, still in their autumn beauty though now but thinly clad, made a fair picture in the white December sunshine. When they reached this spot Rose stopped, and saying she was tired, begged they would leave her to rest on the bench in the sunshine, until they returned. This was agreed to, and they walked on.

Teresa took Rose's place by her father's

side, and Robert lagged behind. With the cane in his hand he kept knocking off the stiff heads of the purple knapweed, the last floral gift of autumn in our hedges and woodlands that so bravely stands the early frosts ; regardless of the winning beauty of nature all around him, or of aught indeed, save his own dark thoughts. He had been vexed and annoyed at having to join the others in their walk, and from being first made irritable by it, the evil spirit within him had been working him up into a state of savage rage. Yielding to his own bad impressions, he had grown to consider himself an ill-used and defrauded man. Rose's beauty stood between him and his rest ; and yet he hated her for it. And her existence stood between him and enormous wealth, and this maddened him. It seemed like a cruel wrong done to him that this young girl so indifferent to him, so exasperatingly cold and yet so lovely, should have it thus in her power to go on being alive, and trampling the joy out of his heart, and

putting her coveted wealth out of his reach by the simple fact that she would not marry him, and that her independent existence was his bane. He had glanced back as they turned again into the wood from the open space where they had left her. There she stood, close to the edge of the chalk-pit. Her dress, looped up for walking, revealed the tiny, well-rounded ankle, and the neat but strong “highlows” with gold buckles, that cased a little foot with an instep arched like a sylph’s. A dark cloth coat edged with fur, and open at the front, but fitting tight to the waist and shoulders, left the outline of her beautiful figure clear against the sky. And beneath the broad brim of her black beaver hat, with its nodding plume of blue feathers, he saw the sunlight falling full on the rich curls and cushioned coils of that bewildering golden hair. One glove was off, and the little white hand shone like a bit of pearl. And so he sauntered on behind them, thinking. His thoughts worked with a wonderful

rapidity, and through them all, as if he were still looking at her, stood Rose in her beauty, alone by the edge of the chalk-pit.

So rapidly came the thoughts that it seemed to him as if another were there suggesting them, and whispering them in his ear—"Go back and speak to her, and have an end to this misery. She must have you—she shall have you—and if not, let her die. Why should she live to flout you, and be your curse? What right has she to stand in your path and be your ruin?" On—on, the thoughts came—faster—louder. And he turned.

The sweat stood on his brow with the agony of that inner temptation; but the heart-sickness passed off and gave place to resolve as soon as he obeyed the suggestion and turned to rejoin Rose.

She was still on the brink of the chalk-pit.

He advanced rapidly, and stood so as to place her between the edge of the precipice and himself.

Rose started when she saw him, and turned pale. But there was no escape. He told her that he had come for the last time, to renew his suit. And as his mad words fell on her ears Rose wondered whether it were not a maniac that stood before her, rather than a man moved by an honourable affection. His face was convulsed with passion, and his words conveyed to her mind the violence of lust, but certainly not the tenderness of love ; while through the whole there was an undisguised greed for her possessions, amounting to a hatred of herself for keeping them back from him.

Finding she made no reply, he suddenly seized her arm, and with a violent and awful oath, pushed her to the brink of the pit. Rose uttered a scream. At that moment there was a rustling sound in the bushes close to where they stood — some one was approaching. Robert released the frightened girl as the noise startled him, and darting into the copse the opposite side from whence the alarm came, he fled

down a narrow path. In a second she saw him again by the side of the pit near the bottom. He leaped down, and dashing off into the thick wood at the base was lost to sight. Rose, pale and trembling, turned round to see who was her deliverer. A few poor sheep had broken bounds and strayed into the wood in search of fresher pasture : and having found what they wanted, were soon quietly grazing in the open space where she stood ! The noise they had made in pushing through the underwood had startled Robert, and to this slight incident she owed her preservation.

She sank on the ground with mingled feelings of horror, terror, and gratitude to heaven for her escape. She had very little doubt of what the wretched man's intentions had been, and she crawled on her hands and knees away from the edge of the chalk cliff, over whose dizzy height she no longer dared to look. By degrees she grew calmer—more assured of her present safety, and better able to face her uncle and

cousin, whose return she every moment expected.

She had hardly stilled her beating heart, and taught her trembling limbs to be firm, when she heard the welcome voices of Teresa and Lord Clifford approaching. They hoped she had not thought them very long. Robert had got tired of their company and gone home some other way. Had she seen him pass? Lord Clifford made some condemnatory remark about the straggling sheep and the shepherd's carelessness; and all continued their walk home, Rose gladly accepting the support of her uncle's arm.

Retired in her own room, Rose Clifford reflected on the events of the day. She felt at last entirely released from her promise of silence, and resolved upon speaking to Lord Clifford of the persecution she was enduring. This, however, could not be done till his return. Robert also was absent; and while he was not at the castle she had nothing to complain of. But at

least she would speak to Father Netherby, and would tell him openly of her attachment to Andrea Orsini, and of their early mutual engagement, which in the young girl's eyes was still very sacred, and ask him if he could not communicate with the Princess Orsini, and let her become aware of the dangers her intended daughter-in-law was running.

Having calmed her terror by this resolve, she rejoined Teresa, and beyond looking very pale, showed no traces of what she had gone through. She saw no more of Robert. He kept out of the way, and left word that he should walk down the park and join his father and the carriage at the lodge-gate. So she was spared the awkwardness of leave-taking.

The next morning Father Netherby came to say mass at the castle, and Rose sent him word she wished to speak with him in private. Much to her annoyance he returned for answer he could place himself at her disposition for a few moments only.

He was summoned to London by the Vicar Apostolic, and having to walk to Blackdean to meet the coach had but little time to spare.

She found it very difficult to enter fully on the question in so limited a space, for she was bashful and timid about it. Without exactly telling the father all that had taken place she gave him to understand that she thought her life in peril, and that she needed protection.

Father Netherby was greatly shocked, and very much distressed at having to leave her just then. However, the absence of Robert from the castle was a guarantee for her present safety ; and either he himself or she must speak to Lord Clifford on his return, and beg him to protect her from his son's insolence. Meanwhile, he warmly embraced the notion of writing to the Orsinis, and promised to do so without loss of time. She consulted him as to whether she might tell Teresa of her sentiments about her brother, and he encouraged

her to do everything that would relieve her justly alarmed feelings and increase her security. He did not know how long he should be detained in London; but he left her his address, in case of anything unexpected occurring, and added that a Capuchin was coming that day to Nutley to undertake his duties during his absence.

It was a happy time, that period between a fortnight and three weeks, that the two cousins spent alone together in the old castle. Madame de Bray was still with her friends in Paris, and was not to return till a day or two before Christmas, and after her arrival they were expecting a house full of guests, and some gaieties at the castle to introduce Rose to the county neighbours before taking her and Teresa to London.

Neither of the girls had at all set their hearts upon all that was intended for their amusement. Rose's thoughts had more than ever gone after her young Italian admirer, since she had seen what passion

might be in its worst shape, and had been taught by it to wish for the lawful protection of the man she loved.

Teresa had trained herself too long for the high mission of her home life to have much care for worldly gaieties. But Lord Clifford thought it was right and fitting, and as he perceived Robert made no way with Rose, and consequently had but little hope of ever seeing her married to his son, he felt it an obligation to give her a further opportunity of choosing for herself elsewhere. As for Teresa, he knew she had only to hold up her little finger to bring Cecil Redcliffe to her feet; and he could not desire a more advantageous marriage for his daughter than that, which had also the additional advantage of keeping her near him.

Rose's spirits rose immensely at the feeling of freedom and security that filled her heart when Robert was gone, and when her conversation with Father Netherby had given her full liberty to think of Andrea,

and even to expect him in England. She told something of her troubles to Teresa ; but did not like to dwell much upon Robert's conduct for fear of distressing her about her brother. Besides which, when he was once out of the house she was too completely happy to allow the recollection of the past to come between her and her present security. So the girls read and talked and sang together, and together they prayed. Rose would laughingly tell Teresa she believed she was making a sort of retreat in preparation for some great event, when she found her cousin more than usually preoccupied with her pious practices.

"She supposed," she said, "the Capuchin father had come on purpose to prepare her."

But as the retreat, if such it were, made no difference in Teresa's cheerful companionship, Rose was quite satisfied it should be as it was ; and so the time sped only too rapidly.

Winter had come down upon them in sudden good earnest. A few wild blustering nights despoiled the forest of its garb of brown and gold, and left the shivering branches bare. And then silently but swiftly, the white pall was spread over the dead face of nature ; and Rose and Teresa awoke one morning to find the world wrapped in snow.

The “ Hammer Ponds,” is the name of a whitewashed, bleak, road-side inn, on the borders of a wide heath in the neighbouring county to that where stands Raymond Castle. Robert had been in the habit of going there to shoot for a short time, during most of the winters he had spent in England. He was therefore well-known at the place, and as he paid high for his accommodation no difficulty was made as to giving up a kitchen for Vincenzo’s use ; who versed in French and Italian cookery, provided his master with something better than bacon and eggs, the staple commodity of the “ Hammer Ponds’ ” hospitality.

Long walks over moor and fen; long dreamy evenings over a large, noiseless, uncompanionable peat fire, afforded a combination which but too well suited the sinister thoughts of the unhappy Robert. He was resolved to rid himself of the haunting beauty of Rose. He was resolved to possess himself without her of the possessions she would not bestow upon him; and bending all the subtle intelligence of his educated mind to study and plan the possibilities, he gave himself up to the thought until he had matured it. At first he had intended taking Vincenzo into his confidence, and so getting him to be his accomplice; but the fellow's present discontented frame of mind gave him a feeling of distrust. He had obtained from Vincenzo all the hints he required—even how to fabricate a white plaster with the adhesive qualities of pitch; and not wishing to have him as an accomplice, it struck him forcibly that he would be a thousand times more useful to him if

he could manage to make him appear the guilty party, and so shelter himself. The statement about the diamonds in the top-drawer, and the missing key, had not been lost upon Roger, either at the time or since. He resolved to possess himself of those diamonds, or of a portion of them. They were to be Vincenzo's reward for "long services and inviolable fidelity." They were not to be his until the very moment he was to leave the house. And as at the same time he resolved to sacrifice the fair girl whom he had once loved and now hated with a savage hate, he argued that Vincenzo would be suspected of the murder as well as of the abstraction of the diamonds.

Vincenzo had made up his mind to go, and as soon as he saw he could do so advantageously he was sure to be in haste to leave. For in truth what affections or ties could a man like him have to endear any persons to him, or any place, except where his interests were concerned?

Upon his return to Raymond Castle,

Robert kept altogether away from the ladies. He generally dined out with one of the young bachelor squires of the neighbourhood, whose small estate lay opposite the park-gates. When he did not, upon some pretence or other he dined in his own den.

Vincenzo had been sent straight from the Hammer Ponds to London to transact some business for Robert, and with orders not to return to the castle until he was sent for.

Father Netherby was still absent; and not having him to consult, and finding everything so apparently settled and secure, Rose hesitated as to the advisability of breaking-up the present peace by a disclosure of the past to Lord Clifford.

Meanwhile, Robert had written to Vincenzo that everything was prospering to his mind, that he wished Vincenzo to come down on the 22nd, and to leave on the evening of the 23rd, because a certain ship was to sail at a time convenient for Vin-

cenzo's reaching the coast on the 24th. As soon as Vincenzo arrived, he went to the den to see his young master and to take his orders. Robert received him with warmth and marked kindness. Vincenzo detected a slight agitation in his manner, but that, perhaps, was not unnatural under the circumstances of his engagement to Rose being still a profound secret.

Robert immediately opened his heart to the faithful servant, the friend of his childhood as he did not hesitate to call him. He told him that Rose and he had decided upon keeping entirely aloof from each other until they could decide upon a fitting time for declaring their mutual attachment. He alleged that his feelings for Rose were of too ardent a nature for him not to run great risk of betraying himself were he seen in her society. And he added, that both of them being convinced the “pious Lord Clifford” would demur about the relationship, Rose wished to have some advice from the higher spiritual powers confirmatory

of their hopes for a dispensation, before broaching the subject to him. The probability, he added, was that he should go himself to London to consult the Vicar Apostolic.

Vincenzo could not resist bantering his young master a little at this sudden change in the purport of his discourse; and at the virtuous and pious tone assumed of an honest attachment, obedience to the Church, and interviews with ecclesiastics!

The banter was of use to Robert, as it made it easier for him to act out his part. He then came round to the present to be made to Vincenzo before leaving. And here, he said, he had been beset by difficulties, till at last, he added with an expression of candid satisfaction, he had hit upon a plan which though rather awkward to execute, would cover all the difficulty. He said he had found his father quite unapproachable on the subject (here Vincenzo ground his teeth, and muttered something under his breath), and that being anxious on his own

account not to offend him just then, he had not liked to press the subject.

“ I myself, as you well know, Vincenzo,” continued the young man, “ am not only hard-up for ready money but deeply in debt, a condition from which nothing but my marriage can release me : and though in a short time I shall be master of all she possesses, yet I am sure you will understand my being loth to call upon my future wife for a large sum of money to pay off an old servant of my father’s. However, I have hit upon a plan by which, if it does not shock your squeamishness, will overcome all difficulties, and put it in my power to repay you as I would wish. You are aware that Miss Clifford has magnificent diamonds. I happen to know that she keeps them in a drawer, of which sometime ago she had lost the key. Now, I might, of course, ask her to let me have a small set out of the many she has. But that would be a thousand times worse than asking for money. It would have a bad appearance ;

and women are apt to set a higher value on their jewels than on aught else. But as I know in a very short time all she has will be mine, I am ready to run the risk of appropriating some of them to my own use for your benefit."

"But what will Miss Rose say," interrupted Vincenzo, "when she finds it out?"

"Tut, man," replied Robert, with impatience, "do you suppose she will quarrel with me for a few diamonds? He must be a pretty sort of lover indeed, who cannot stop the girl he is going to marry from crying over a few lost stones. Leave all that to me."

"Certainly, sir," said Vincenzo, "it is no business of mine."

"But now," added Robert, "it is necessary that I should have your assistance for one part of the transaction. I cannot get the jewels to-night, because you know she might take it into her head to wear some of them in the evening—a brooch or something—or she might require some other article

out of the same drawer in which she keeps them, and then she or her maid would find it out if some were missing, too soon to suit our purpose. I shall endeavour to-morrow evening, while the servants are all down at supper, and the girls are with my father in the drawing-room, to slip into Rose's bedroom and try whether the drawer is still unlocked. If it is, all well and good. If not, we shall require to pick the lock. But whether or no, it is important that Miss Rose should sleep very sound that night ; and as my sister sleeps in the adjoining room, and I believe the girls are apt to have the door open communicating with each other's apartments, it is as well that her sleep also should be particularly sound. Now, Vincenzo, I come to the point—to the only thing you will be required to do before you can be put in possession of the prize I destine for you. You will serve the coffee in the drawing-room to-morrow night, and you will take care that both the young ladies' cups are drugged.”

A curious expression passed over Vincenzo's face. He was thinking of his story of the man at Padua.

"Then," continued Robert, without waiting for a reply, "when we have given them time to fall asleep, you and I will creep to Rose's door. You will wait outside. I will go in and bring out the particular case of diamonds I intend you to have." (Reader, they were not the Clifford diamonds, but those that her mother had received from the Orsinis.) You can have my grey horse ready saddled, and it will be your own fault if you are not out of the country before even Rose has found out the little preinstalment I have made upon what will one day be all my own. As a reason for your going at so late an hour, the servants have a little merry-making to-morrow night, and you very naturally linger to the last moment; as you know the ship does not sail till the next morning, and you only want to arrive just in time to go on board."

On the whole, Vincenzo saw no reason

why he should oppose the plan. He did not disbelieve Robert's story of his secret engagement with his cousin. There was a great air of probability about it, and to a coarse mind like Vincenzo's there was nothing overstrained in Rose's having begun by refusing and avoiding him, and finally allowing herself to be won over by the persevering addresses of so handsome a youth as Robert Clifford. Money was his object, and that he secured ; and after all, whatever might happen to Mr. Clifford, he would be safe out of the country before anything serious could occur to complicate his own position. So after a little further discussion about the details, what was to be done with the horse, and how it was to be got back to the castle, the bargain was struck, and each promised to stand well to his part.

And thus the younger and educated rascal outwitted the older man, as he had already done his own father. Robert's spirits rose to a fiendish height when he

thus saw his way clear before him. Or perhaps it was that having such far darker and more dreadful intentions in his own mind than simply to possess himself of the diamonds for Vincenzo's benefit, he could only bear up against the horrors of his conscience by affecting a mad hilarity. The whole of the next day he wore a different aspect. He scarcely spoke to any one. He lurked about the place like an evil spirit. He seemed absorbed in concentrated thought, He drank, but he hardly tasted food, and he avoided meeting his father, or Teresa, or Rose the whole day.

Far differently had the day been passed by the two innocent girls. It had been what Teresa called a *complete* day, beginning with early mass in the house, and going through a regular, unbroken course of home duties, home affections, and peaceful thoughts. Never had Teresa seemed more radiant. She was in health and in spirits. She had had some conversation with her father which had particularly cheered her.

and seemed to her more than a sufficient reward for the life of devotion to him she had endeavoured to lead. Yes, Lord Clifford was a greatly altered man ; but she wondered whether he would ever be less melancholy, or whether those terrible fits of gloom, so sad to witness, would follow him to the grave. Even this, she hoped might in time give place to more even spirits. She had witnessed a change so immense that she would despair of nothing. The knowledge that Vincenzo was about to depart was another welcome drop in the cup of gladness that heaven seemed to have put into her hand on that 23rd of December. Madame de Bray was expected home the next day, and that was an additional cause for joy.

In the evening the girls sat with Lord Clifford. Robert, as usual, was absent, whether in his own den or dining out no one knew. Lord Clifford liked Rose and Teresa to play and sing of an evening while he was reading. Teresa had a rich

contralto voice, and Rose's was clear and sweet as a bird's.

At half-past eight a servant came into the room, and said one of the school-children had been sent up by Father Netherby and wanted to speak to Miss Clifford. Rose left the room. The child had brought her a note, which he said he was desired to give into her own hands. It ran thus :

"DEAR DAUGHTER,

"I have just returned home. The good Capuchin tells me that all your honourable family are in good health. I think Miss Rose will rest more contented this night when she hears that I have not come back alone. The letter I wrote some weeks ago has had the effect of bringing over a certain young gentleman. He joined me in London, and nothing would serve him but to come to my house. Sleep in peace, my child, and to-morrow I will see his lordship and explain all, and then, no doubt, the Prince O.

may come to the castle and pay his respects. Leave all in the hands of God, and may he have you in his holy keeping.

“Your faithful servant to command,

“FR. NETHERBY, S.J.”

No words could tell the joy and happiness of Rose Clifford. She beckoned her cousin out of the room, while her uncle remained absorbed in his book. Teresa was hardly less rejoiced than Rose herself, and after exhausting their delight in mutual congratulations, they returned to the drawing-room and rang for coffee. Each girl took a cup, but Rose left hers untasted. She went back to the piano, and gave vent to her happiness in singing with all her heart and soul, as though she were inspired. Lord Clifford looked up with a smile, and said :

“Well done, my dear Rose ; you are in wonderful voice to-night.”

“Rose,” said Teresa, “are you going to drink your coffee ?”

"No, thank you; I do not want it."

"Then I shall drink it. I cannot think why I am so thirsty to-night."

And so Teresa drank the two drugged cups of coffee. At about a quarter to eleven the girls retired to rest. Their rooms opened into each other with double doors, and in the thickness of the wall, which was about four feet, there was a very large, deep closet, in which they hung their dresses. The door of the closet opened at right angles with the door of Rose's room, so that any one standing in the closet could, had he tried, seen much of what was passing in the room through the slit of light between the door-post and the door itself, when the latter stood ajar. Rose was in a state of great excitement. She said she did not feel the least sleepy, and wanted Teresa to sit up with her, but Teresa complained of being unusually tired, and could hardly keep her eyes open, or answer Rose's rhapsodies of delight. She was undressing in her own room when Rose came in to beg

as she could not sit up to talk to her, she would at least sleep with her. Teresa's was the inner room of the two, and in one angle of the room was a small door, which led to a turret staircase that communicated with the ground-floor of the house. Rose's room opened into a large passage, that branched into the main upstairs gallery of the house, which led to the great oak staircase. Teresa consented to Rose's request. They knelt together to say their prayers, then embracing like sisters, Teresa lay down in Rose's bed, and was almost instantly asleep. It was a large bed, hung with blue damask, and the curtains were partially drawn. It was not the first time that the excitable Rose had persuaded Teresa to stop the night with her, for she said she always slept calmer when her good cousin was near her. This night there seemed no sleep likely to visit Rose's bright eyes. She stirred up the fire and made a good blaze, and having partly undressed, put on a warm dressing-gown, thrust her naked feet into

Russian embroidered slippers edged with fur, and sat down to think and dream, and ponder over the delightful fact that Andrea, her own beloved Andrea, was so near, and that to-morrow she should see him.

It was a cold, still night; there was no wind, and the snow lay thick on the ground. After sitting some time she began to feel chilly, and opened the door leading to Teresa's room to take a cloak with a hood to it that hung in the closet. She had not lighted the candle, as the fire gave light enough, and when she went to fetch the cloak she left the door of her room a little ajar, that she might distinguish the cloak she wanted. It was however nearly at the end of the closet in the dark, but she knew it from the fact that it was edged with fur. She put it on in the closet, and was just on the point of stepping out when she heard the door of her room leading into the passage opened softly. She stood transfixed with horror, as standing herself in deep shadow she perceived by the light of the fire the

figure of Robert Clifford enter her bedroom, and Vincenzo in the passage outside. The scene by the chalk-pit rushed back upon her memory, and some of the dark threats he had then uttered, and she said inwardly, “He is come to murder me, or worse.” She expected to see him draw the curtain of her bed, and looked for the knife in his hand. Would he recognize Teresa? Yes, there was light enough for that. But not finding her in bed, would he search the room for her, and murder her where she stood? To her astonishment, as she watched his movements through the slit, it was not the bed he approached but the chest of drawers, where she kept the diamonds. She recollected then her uncle’s injunction to replace the lost key, but it had never been done (and that, Robert had ascertained when he, as had been arranged, got into her room for one second while the servants were at supper). She saw him open the drawer very noiselessly and abstract one of the jewel cases. It was her mother’s. He turned to

the door, and Vincenzo advanced a step. As he walked to the door his profile was before her. His hair was dishevelled, his face ghastly. It was the last sight she ever had of Robert Clifford, and though she did not reason upon his appearance then, it was a sight never to be forgotten. All this time (and it took less time to happen than it does to tell) she was rapidly calculating her chances of escape, for she was quite persuaded Robert Clifford was not going to content himself with a small case of diamonds, though they might be valued at two thousand pounds. When he stood at the open door speaking to Vincenzo, his back was turned to her. Quick as thought she gently turned the handle of the door leading into Teresa's room, shot across it, and vanished through the door leading to the turret staircase. Her dress made no noise, as it was all of woollen material, trimmed with soft fur. When she got upon the landing outside the door at the top of the narrow winding stairs, she paused for a mo-

ment to reflect how she should get safe out of the house. Of course all the doors were locked ; and even could she have hoped to run down the long gallery without being seen by Vincenzo, or by her intending murderer, who, not finding her, would in another moment be descending the oak stairs, she felt uncertain of being able to undo the lock, and alarmed at the thought of the noise it would make. Still her only idea of safety was to leave the house. Horror as well as panic had seized her, and she only wanted to be away and free, no matter how. She recollected with the vivid rapidity of thought in moments of great excitement, that in her early walk that day with Teresa, when they were returning from the ponds where a number of children were sliding, they had noticed that one of the iron bars outside a comparatively low window in the banqueting-hall had got loose and fallen out. They had intended speaking to Lord Clifford about it, but it was probably not yet repaired. She deter-

mined to make for that window. Not daring to go through the servants' offices, when she reached the foot of the turret stairs she made her way through the suite of sitting-rooms in that wing of the castle. Then she would have, from the door of her uncle's present study, only just to cross the long gallery and enter the banqueting-hall. It had one door communicating with the gallery, the door by which she entered, two large folding-doors opening into one of the sitting-rooms to the right as she entered, and a small low Gothic door opening on to the terrace, and from that on to the park. She turned the key of the door by which she had entered, and that of the folding-doors, and then feeling herself in comparative safety, began to investigate her further means of escape. The low Gothic door was locked, and the key taken away. The iron bar had not been replaced in the window, and by that she would escape. It was too high to reach from the ground, being about eight feet. She pushed a table under the

window, opened the latticed pane where the outside iron bar was missing, and with some difficulty forced herself through, and clinging with her poor little chafed fingers to the leaden moulding of the lattice-frame, let herself down on the ground—alone, at midnight, in a vast plain of snow !

The miserable Robert had not heard the light footstep of his intended victim. Vincenzo had received the casket of jewels, and Robert, bidding him make haste to mount his horse, had re-entered the room. He listened for the breathing of the quiet sleeper, but heard nothing. “She sleeps soundly,” thought he. He hoped there would be no struggle. How should he bear to see the beautiful girl he had loved, and whom now he hated, still calling it love, battling with him for the dear life ! “If she wakes I will tell her that since she will not love me, she shall love no other man.”

And so he nerved himself, and drew aside the curtain, holding ready in his hand his horrid contrivance for suffocating her sweet .

breath, and "Burking" her as it was called in more recent times. But when his eyes fell upon the sleeping form before him he started back, and forgetful of danger, hoarsely articulated Teresa's name. She stirred not. For a moment he thought his excited senses had deceived him : but no, it was Teresa's dark tresses that fell on the white pillow ; it was the classic outline of Teresa's saint-like face, and not the golden locks of Rose, and her budding, cherub loveliness.

He staggered from the bed, and the curtain fell again before the motionless sleeper. Scarcely caring for detection now, and maddened by the sudden shock of having missed his victim, he hunted in the other room, even in the closet where Rose had stood concealed. In vain. The bird had flown. Her "soul had been delivered as a sparrow out of the snare of the fowler." He clenched his fist and cursed aloud as he closed the door and walked down the passage. When he got down-stairs he heard

the feet of Vincenzo's horse riding rapidly away, and with rage and terror in his heart he returned to his own room. His fears were divided into many channels. “When had Rose made her escape? Had she seen him enter her room, and would she betray him? Or had she gone off before? Perhaps after all she was still in the house. But anyhow he dared not look for her, and so could know nothing till morning.

Swift as a deer across the snow, Rose fled for her life. She took the direction of Nutley, for it was at the Chapel House she meant to take refuge. Father Netherby was there; dear old nurse Dorothy was there—and one other; one who would soon have a right to protect her. As she fled along the turf she heard the sound of a horse trotting fast down the road. She thought she was being pursued. At that moment she neared the small circular pond, with the island overgrown with bushes in the centre. It was covered with ice; but she knew it would bear her weight, for she had

seen the children sliding on it. She made her way across the ice on her hands and knees, and climbing the low bank of the miniature island, crouched down among the willows. Still she heard the horse's hoofs falling with a muffled sound upon the snow. She remembered the legend she had heard in her childhood of the Bucklyn Shaig. It must be the fiend, riding late that night! She remembered little Andrea, sitting with his arm round her in the char-a-banc as they had passed by that island that bright summer day, many years ago. Ah, why was he then so near, and yet so far, in her hour of need! On came the rider. Her heart stopped with superstitious terror, for her nerves and courage were nearly spent. The man on horseback passed at full trot, not twenty yards from where she was hiding among the branches. She caught sight of his face in the moonlight; it was evil enough to be that of a fiend, but she saw that it was Vincenzo, riding away with the casket of jewels.

Relieved and reassured, she waited till he was well out of sight, then emerging from her hiding-place, she continued her course to the Chapel House. When she reached it the sense of her position rushed full upon her consciousness, and she would have given worlds to have found some other secure refuge than the house where Andrea was sleeping. How dreadful it would be if, roused by her knocking and ringing, he were to come forth and see her in that plight ! What would he think ? For a moment she almost wished he were not there. And yet, no ; he would only have to hear her story to understand why she had come ; and then it would be so delightful to have him near her. Still had it been possible she would gladly have waited till it was nearer day. She could not tell, but she supposed it might be barely two o'clock in the morning. The cold was intense ; she had no stockings on ; and though she had drawn the hood of her cloak over her head, she was not half enough clothed for such bitter

weather. The snow tempted her to sit down and sleep, but she knew how dangerous that was, and, trembling in every limb, she pushed open the wicket gate and standing beneath the simple wooden porch of the Chapel House, knocked violently.

It was so long before she could make any one hear, that she began to fear that her courage was forsaking her, and that she should die there on the threshold. At length it was obvious that her repeated knocking had roused the inmates. The door slowly opened, she thought she saw Father Netherby standing on the stairs, with a light in his hand; she thought she saw another face much younger looking over his shoulder. Anyhow, she gave an inarticulate sob, and fell fainting into the arms of good Mrs. Dorothy.

In the church of Saint Cecilia, in Rome, is an exquisitely touching statue of the Saint as she was found when her cruel murderers left her. The little figure lies as

it fell—lifeless on the marble pavement: the supple limbs are slightly drawn up, and the palms of her delicate hands joined as in prayer, with the arms stretched down, rest close to the partially bended knees. The face is turned to the ground, so that only a part of the profile is visible ; and the thick coil of hair has loosened on the crown of her graceful head. It was in an attitude like this they found Teresa, when the morning came and the wail of death went through the house. Had she not said she would gladly give her life for the happiness of another ? And this unconsciously, she had done. The family physician was sent for ; but she had been dead many hours. The doctor said she had died of the hereditary disease ; he had always apprehended it would be so from the day he had been called in when Teresa had heard of her aunt's death. And so there was no coroner's inquest ; and the secret of the drugged coffee did not transpire.

“Vengeance is mine ; I will repay, saith

the Lord." And in repaying He shows mercy. Roger was a broken-hearted man, and the ghost of Henry Bethune was avenged. Perhaps if he had known more he would have died a maniac instead of living a penitent.

When Rose was sufficiently recovered, she was moved to Nutley Hall, with Dorothy and Madame de Bray, who arrived the very day she was expected, to find death and all but despair, where she had hoped for a bright and happy welcome. Teresa was the last of the family of Clifford who was laid in the family vault of Nutley. Her funeral is still spoken of among the peasantry that remember to have heard of the saintly maiden, and who cherish her memory for her own sake, and for that of their parents who so loved and honoured her, and taught their children to do the same. It was attended by all the country round. A sudden instinct seemed to tell the hearts of all that a saint had gone to heaven.

Robert was not present.

Very soon after, Rose was married quite privately in the family chapel of Nutley Hall, and immediately went back to Italy with her husband.

Madame de Bray visited them later, and in due time helped to educate the younger princes and princesses Orsini.

Rose told Andrea but she never told her uncle of the stolen diamonds.

The vessel in which Vincenzo sailed for Genoa was wrecked in the Gulf of Spezzia, and Vincenzo was drowned. He had taken the diamonds out of their setting, and had sewn them in a leathern belt. As the wretched man sank into the sea, the belt burst, and for a second the unconscious ocean was flashed with a shower of bright jewels, like a flight of fire-flies upon its bosom ; and so he and his ill-gotten gains perished together.

Roger might be seen about the house and grounds occasionally, for some few weeks after ; Father Netherby was often there, but no one so often as Cecil Redcliffe. He

followed the unhappy man like his shadow, and could hardly be persuaded to remain behind when Lord Clifford, after settling all his affairs and leaving them in good hands, left England never to return. But Cecil Redcliffe was born to be an English country gentleman, and not a hero. He married late in life, but he *did* marry—a woman to whom he could talk of his first love, and who consented to call their eldest girl Teresa.

Very few persons ever saw Roger again. Sometimes, for a brief space, when compelled to do so by reasons connected with family affairs, he would suddenly appear; but it was a mystery where he sprang from, and whither he vanished.

One day, about fifteen years after the marriage of Rose, the founder of the order of the Passionists, Blessed Paul of the Cross, called at the palace of the Prince Orsini, Rose's father-in-law, in Rome, and asked to see the prince. When his name was announced, the prince marvelled a little what could have procured him the pleasure of

receiving a man already so honoured for his sanctity, and desired him to be shown at once into his presence. The Blessed Paul had come to tell the prince that in their monastery of Monte Cavo (built by Cardinal York, on the spot where had stood the temple of Jupiter) there was an English nobleman who wanted to see him.

“ You must come at once, prince,” said the saint, “ for my poor son is near death, and he is anxious to see you while he has the full use of his faculties. You know him,” added he, “ and know him well ; although you have never found out that he was spending nearly every hour of his life in a whitewashed cell in our house. But come,” said he, rising with a benign smile as if to visit a dying man were no sad mission : “ we have no time to lose.”

In the mists of autumn and of spring, in the snows of winter, and in the glaring sun of summer, stand the white walls of the Passionist Monastery on the extreme summit of Monte Cavo,—always a landmark to the

traveller, always catching the eye as a bright point in that wide landscape, save when the low rolling clouds cover up half the mountain, and steep the good fathers in one of those cold fogs that add so much to the austerity of their life.

The prince and the saint travelled together over the old pagan Via Triumphalis, to witness a very different triumph from any surmised by the gorgeous Romans in their heathen pride—the triumph of contrition and Divine love; over the once hard and now broken heart of a great penitent. Roger Clifford lay in the black habit of the order, on a rude, narrow bed in his cell, with no furniture save a couple of chairs, a small table, and a crucifix. His eyes lighted up with a look of pleasure and of peace, as he kissed the hand of the superior who entered first to announce the prince. He left them alone together. What transpired in that meeting, how much was revealed and in what way, the prince never divulged—and neither shall we.

When he came forth from the dying man's cell, his face betrayed the traces of tears. He remained some time longer with Blessed Paul, who told him that Lord Clifford had never taken vows, or been formally admitted to the order. His necessary duties as an English landed proprietor, and the melancholy circumstances connected with Robert, into whose hands it would not have been right to have voluntarily placed the responsibility which the father still might fulfil, rendered his doing so unadvisable. “But,” added the saint, “he has lived here like one of us, and we have permitted him to wear the habit because it gave him greater security against being recognised, and few have worn it more worthily. He has endeared himself to us all by his deep humility and invariable sweetness. He knows his end is near, and he rejoices. He will hardly last through the night.”

The saint spoke true. That night the tired spirit of Roger was at rest. The next

day his remains were laid in the burying-ground of the monastery, by the hands of the monks. And as with the rest of the dead in that silent spot, there was no recording-stone to say that Roger Baron Clifford, slept beneath.

The day after his funeral (he had particularly begged it might not be before), Prince Orsini announced to all the members of the family, in Italy and in England, the death of Lord Clifford, and to such whom it concerned, where and how he died.

Robert, in spite of succeeding to his father's title (though not to Raymond Castle, which was left to Rose as an act of reparation—Robert being so unworthy), lived an obscure life in Paris, where he embraced the principles "of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity." He was shot down by one of his own party on the barricades of '89, whether purposely or by accident remains uncertain.

Even in his case it is not past hope that the prayers and pious life of the sister who

died through his means, were allowed to procure for him a better death than could have been anticipated.

Father Netherby had never lost sight of Annette Barrow after the sad scene we witnessed in the fisherman's hut. Annette became a sister of charity—the only order of religious women who were permitted to retain any footing in Paris during the Revolution.

Robert, when wounded, was carried into a neighbouring house where Annette was living in the strictest privacy, escaping when she dared on her errands of mercy through the blood-stained streets of Paris. When the Englishman was brought in, his face suddenly recalled to Annette another youth who had been brought into her presence with a death-wound. She wondered that, having seen many wounded men, this one alone should recall poor Jacques. But when she looked again she knew why !

She did not reveal herself to him ; and Robert, in the agonies of death, knew her

not. But Annette did for him, and that under far more perilous and difficult circumstances, what she had done for Jacques. She procured him the presence of a priest, and the last sacraments. Let us hope so great a grace would not have been bestowed in vain!

With the death of Roger, the elder branch of the Clifford family became extinct.

Nutley Hall and Raymond Castle have long since passed into other hands. The Chapel House, with its low "upper chamber," is likely to be replaced by a more fitting building.

The fatal well is filled up. Nothing remains of the past, save the belief still lingering among the surrounding peasantry, of the old legend of the Bucklyn Shaig.

THE END.

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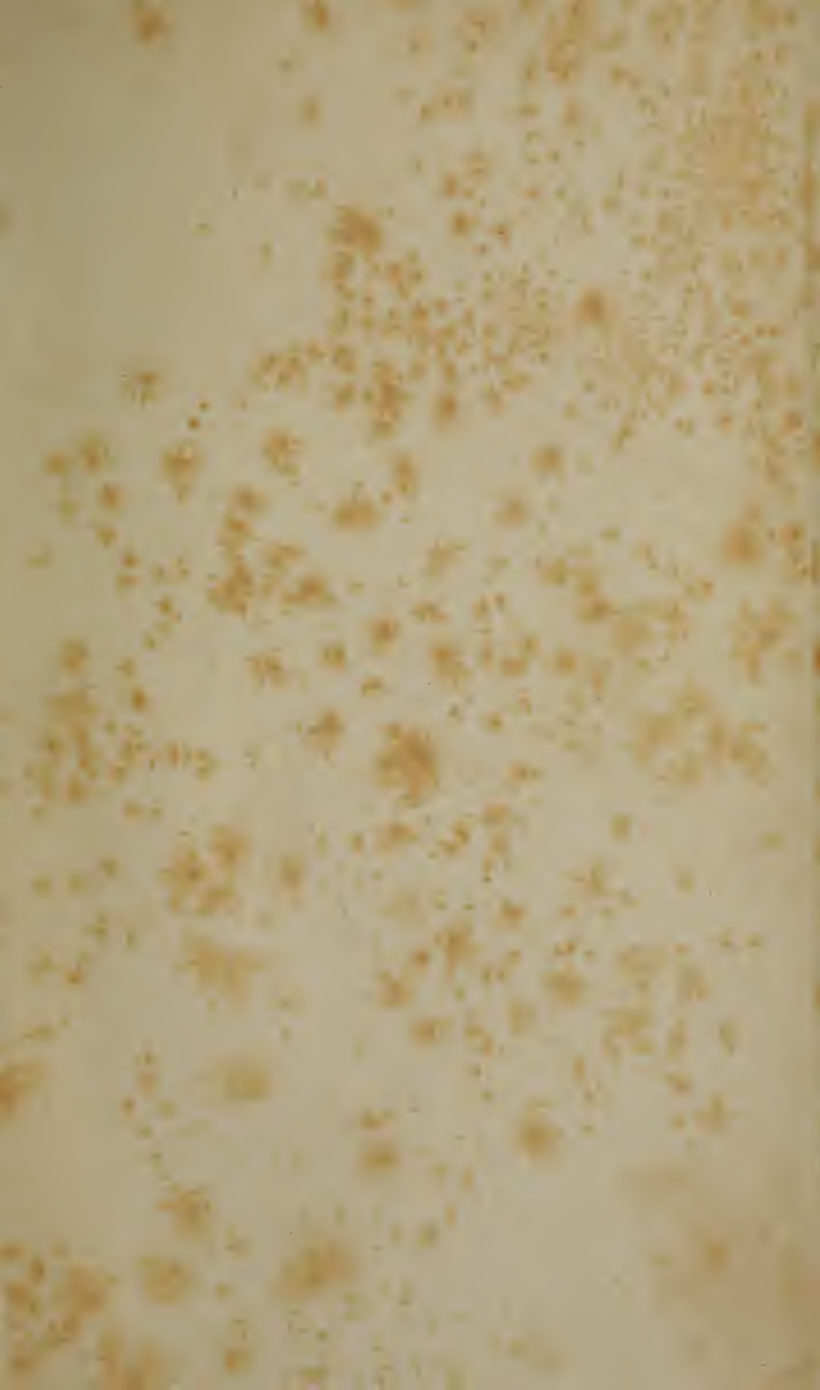
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